

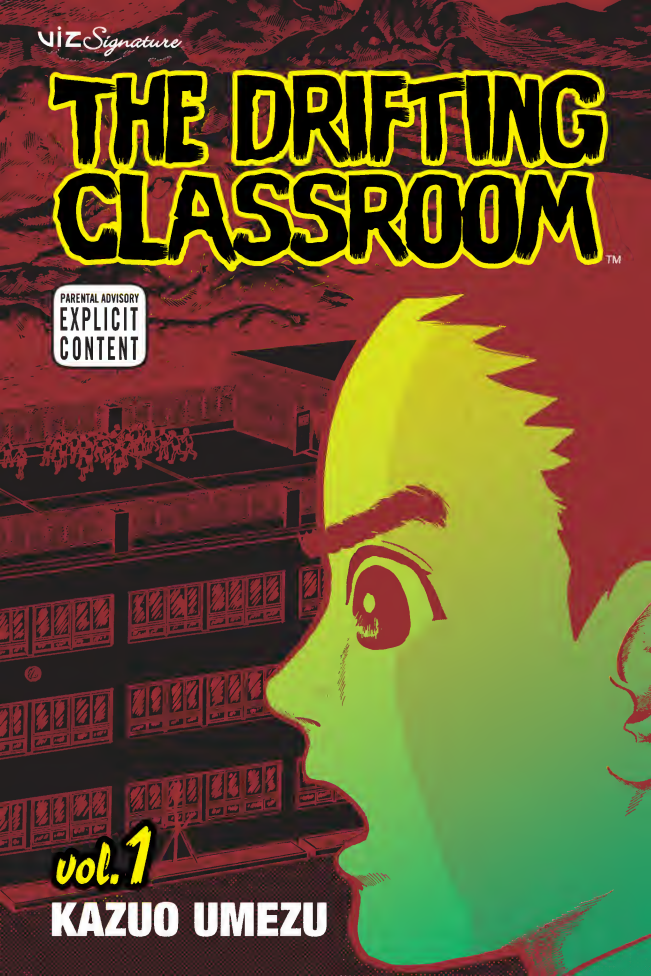
viz *Signature*

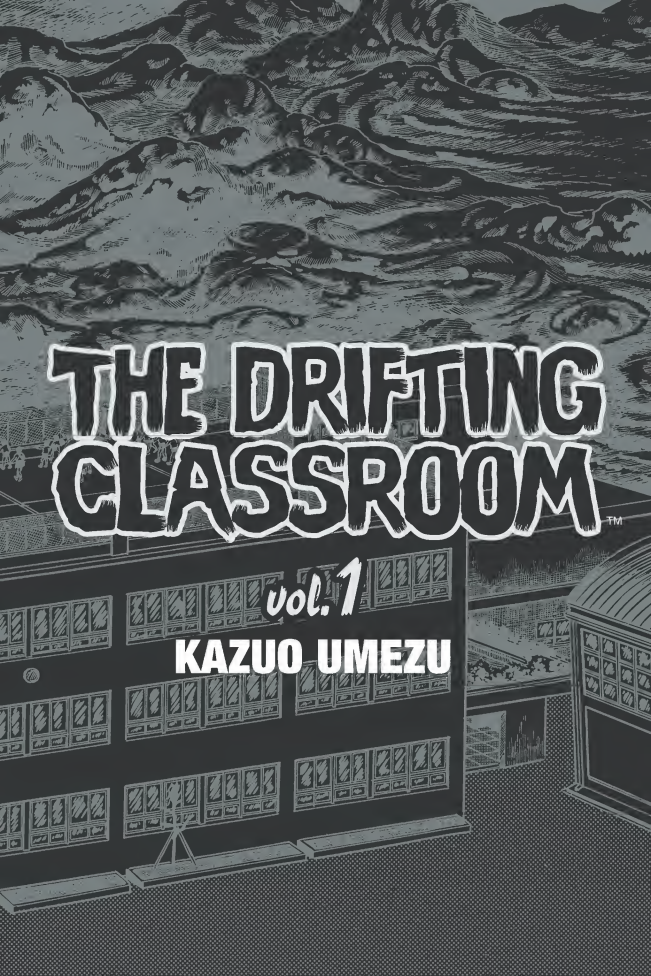
THE DRIFTING CLASSROOM™

PARENTAL ADVISORY
EXPLICIT
CONTENT

vol. 1

KAZUO UMEZU

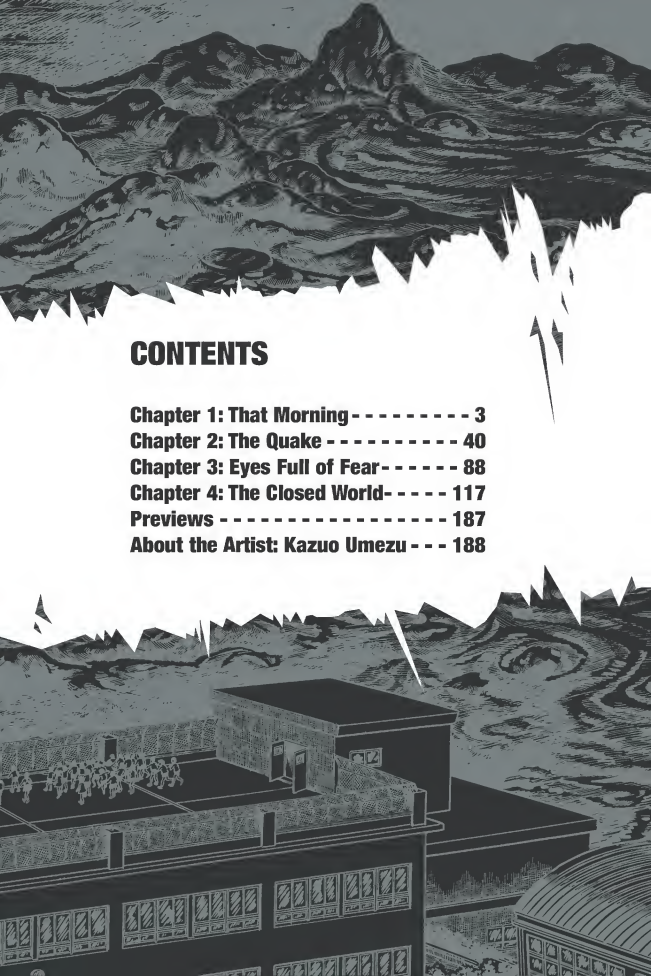




THE DRIFTING CLASSROOM™

vol. 1

KAZUO UMEZU



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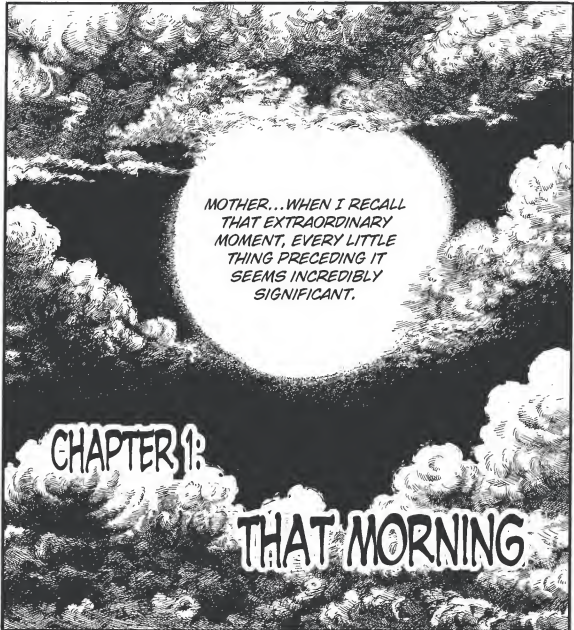
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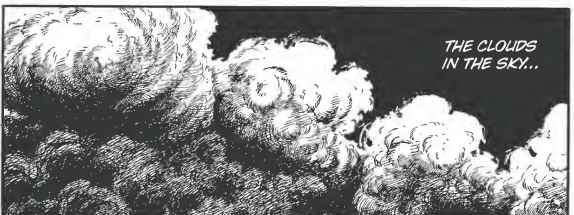
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MOTHER...WHEN I RECALL
THAT EXTRAORDINARY
MOMENT, EVERY LITTLE
THING PRECEDING IT
SEEMS INCREDIBLY
SIGNIFICANT.

CHAPTER 1:

THAT MORNING



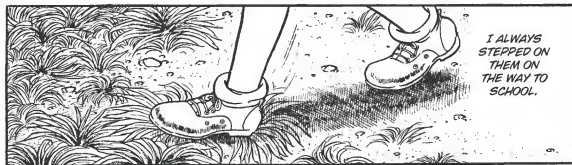
THE CLOUDS
IN THE SKY...



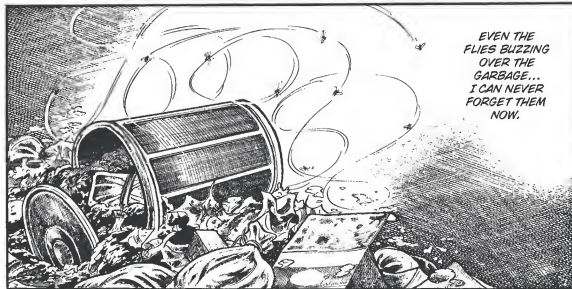
THE
TREES
I SAW
EVERY
DAY...



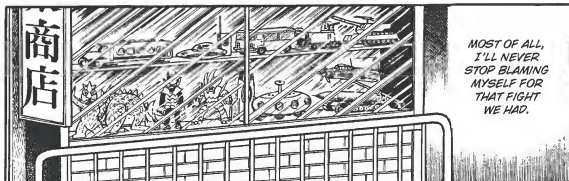
THE OVER-
GROWN
WEEDS I
KEPT ON
TRYING TO
TRAMPLE.



I ALWAYS
STEPPED ON
THEM ON
THE WAY TO
SCHOOL.



EVEN THE
FLIES BUZZING
OVER THE
GARBAGE...
I CAN NEVER
FORGET THEM
NOW.



MOST OF ALL,
I'LL NEVER
STOP BLAMING
MYSELF FOR
THAT FIGHT
WE HAD.



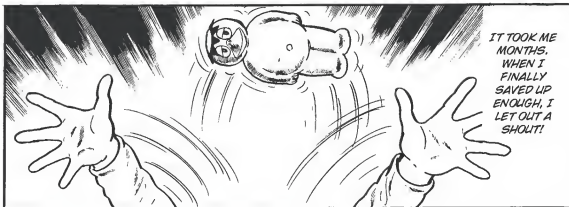
YOU WERE RIGHT. I
WAS ALREADY A
SIXTH GRADER. I
WAS TOO OLD TO
ASK FOR A
"FUTURE CAR."



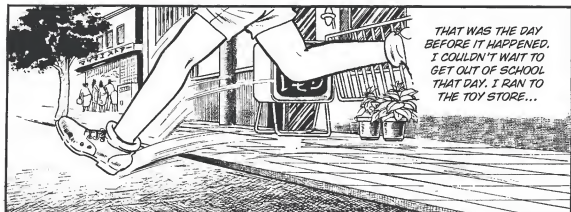
BUT I WANTED TO
HAVE ONE,
BECAUSE YOU
COULD OPERATE IT
BY MICROPHONE.



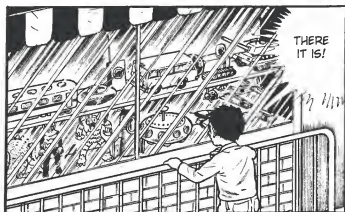
I KNEW YOU
WOULDN'T BUY ONE,
SO I SECRETLY
SAVED UP MONEY
ON MY OWN.



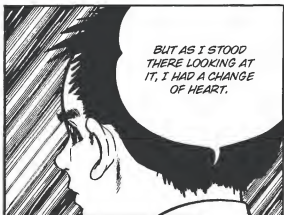
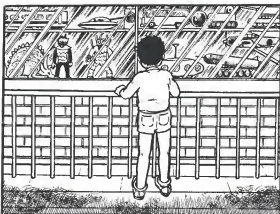
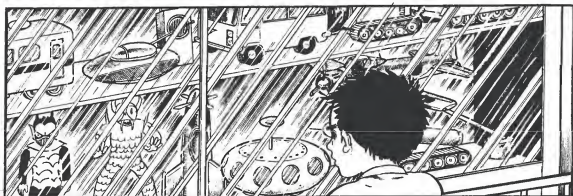
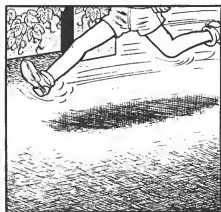
IT TOOK ME
MONTHS.
WHEN I
FINALLY
SAVED UP
ENOUGH, I
LET OUT A
SHOUT!



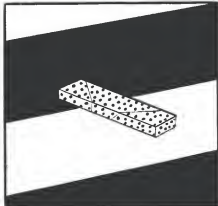
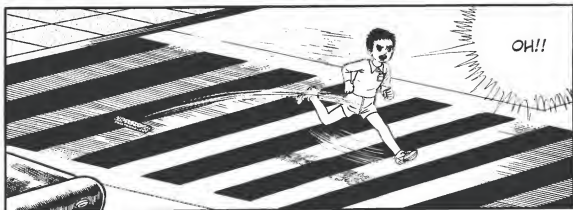
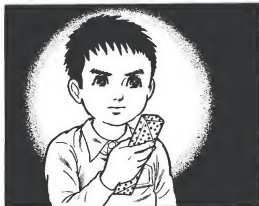
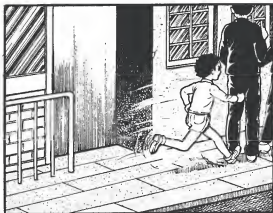
THAT WAS THE DAY
BEFORE IT HAPPENED.
I COULDN'T WAIT TO
GET OUT OF SCHOOL
THAT DAY. I RAN TO
THE TOY STORE...

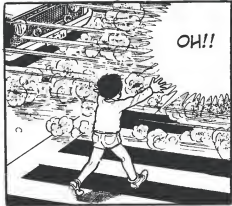
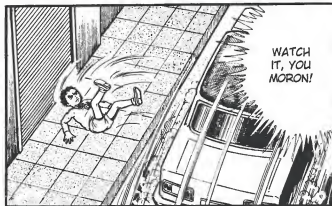
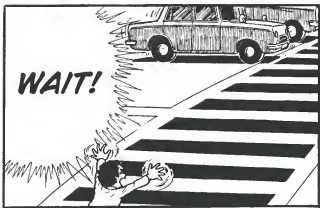
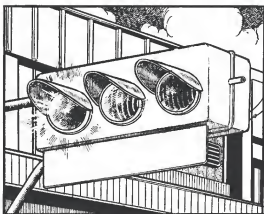
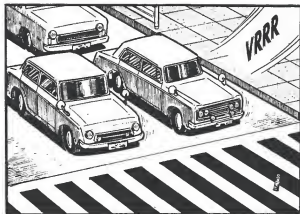


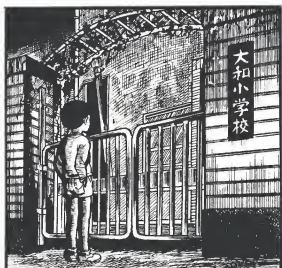
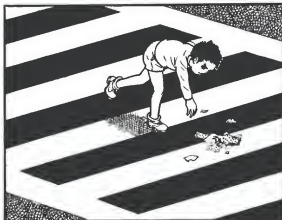
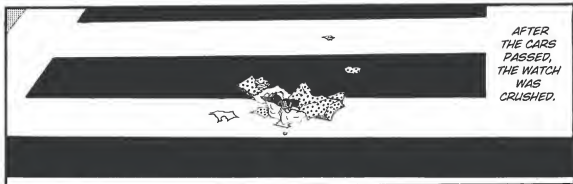
THERE
IT IS!



BUT AS I STOOD
THERE LOOKING AT
IT, I HAD A CHANGE
OF HEART.

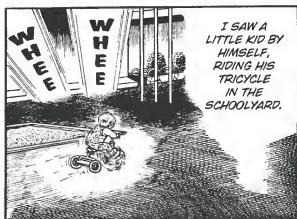
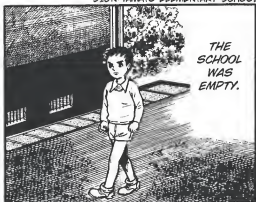


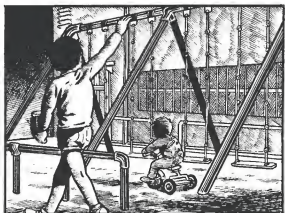
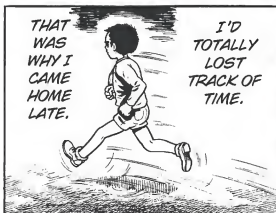
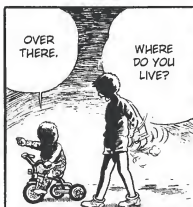
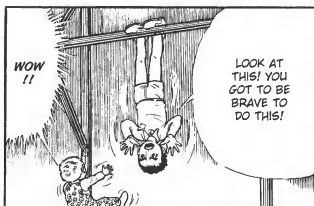


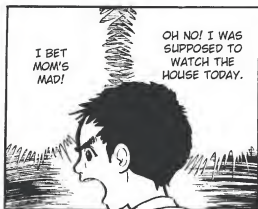




*SIGN=YAMATO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL







I BET
MOM'S
MAD!

OH NO! I WAS
SUPPOSED TO
WATCH THE
HOUSE TODAY.



SHO, WHERE
HAVE YOU
BEEN? WHY ARE
YOU SO LATE!?



I'M
HOME!

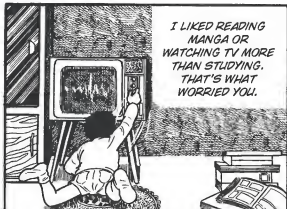


I DIDN'T
WANT TO
GROW UP.



LOOK AT YOUR
CLOTHES! WHEN
ARE YOU GOING TO
GROW UP!

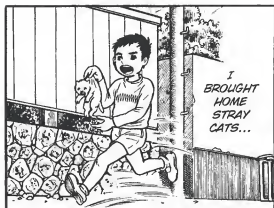
LIKE I
EXPECTED,
SHE WAS
UPSET.



I LIKED READING
MANGA OR
WATCHING TV MORE
THAN STUDYING.
THAT'S WHAT
WORRIED YOU.



I LIKED
CLIMBING ON
ROOFTOPS,
OR RUNNING
ALONG THE
BRIDGE
RAILING...



I
BROUGHT
HOME
STRAY
CATS...



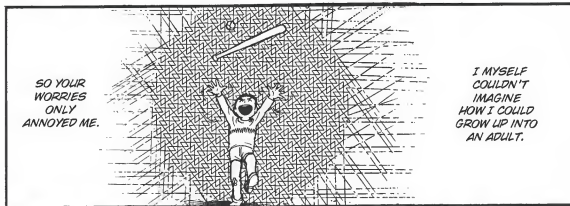
ON TOP OF THAT, I
WASN'T GOOD WITH
MONEY, SO I ALWAYS
ASKED FOR MORE
ALLOWANCE.



MOTHER, YOU ALWAYS
USED TO SAY, "HOW IN THE
WORLD IS HE GOING TO
BECOME AN ADULT? HE'S
SO IRRESPONSIBLE!"



I
LIKED
TO PULL
PRANKS
...



SO YOUR
WORRIES
ONLY
ANNOYED ME.

I MYSELF
COULDN'T
IMAGINE
HOW I COULD
GROW UP INTO
AN ADULT.



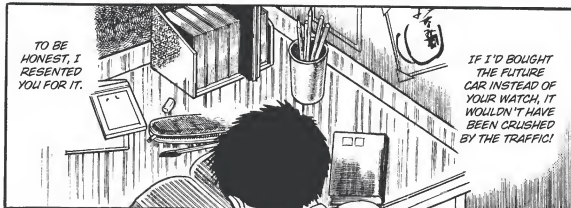
AFTER
DINNER, I
RAN UP TO
MY ROOM.



I'M
FINISHED!



I TRIED TO
STUDY, BUT I
WAS IN A BAD
MOOD, SO I
COULDN'T
CONCENTRATE.



TO BE
HONEST, I
RESENTED
YOU FOR IT.

IF I'D BOUGHT
THE FUTURE
CAR INSTEAD OF
YOUR WATCH, IT
WOULDN'T HAVE
BEEN CRUSHED
BY THE TRAFFIC!



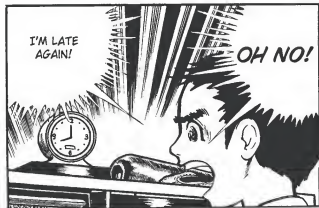
IT'S
PROBABLY
JUST ONE OF
MOM'S
STUPID
STUDY
GUIDES!



SO WHEN
I FOUND
SOMETHING
WRAPPED IN MY
BACKPACK, I
DIDN'T EVEN
BOTHR TO
OPEN IT.



WHEN I WENT
TO BED I FELL
ASLEEP
ALMOST
IMMEDIATELY.







YOU ALWAYS
WAKE ME UP!
SAY SOMETHING!

HOW
COULD YOU
DO THIS!!



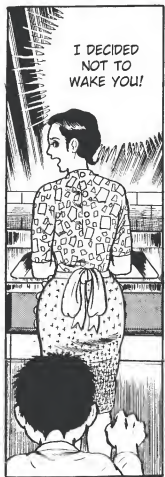
HOW COULD YOU SLEEP THROUGH THAT ALARM,
ANYWAY? I'M STILL REALLY MAD AT YOU, YOU KNOW!



HMPH! YOU'RE IN
SIXTH GRADE!
ISN'T IT TIME YOU
LEARNED TO GET UP
ON YOUR OWN?



WHAT!!
S-SO YOU
LET ME
SLEEP IN?!



I DECIDED
NOT TO
WAKE YOU!

WHAT ARE YOU *TALKING* ABOUT? HURRY UP AND EAT YOUR BREAKFAST AND GO TO SCHOOL! I CAN'T CLEAN UP THE KITCHEN UNTIL YOU LEAVE.

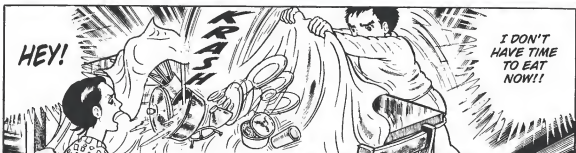


A-ARE YOU GOING TO STAB ME?

WHAT?!



HEY!



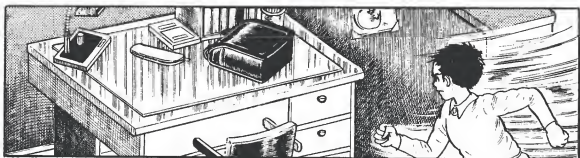
I DON'T HAVE TIME TO EAT NOW!!

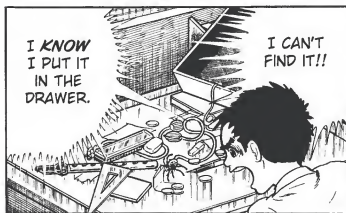
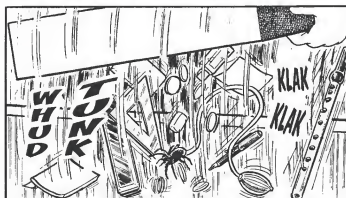
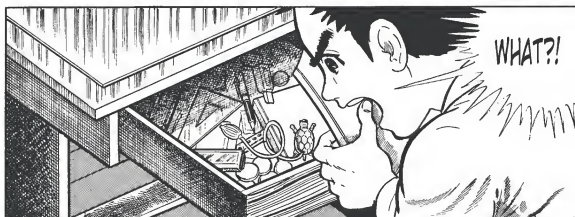


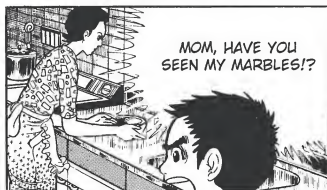
SHO!!

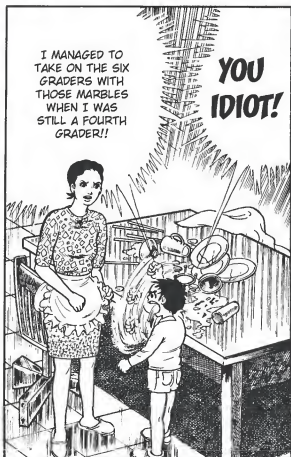


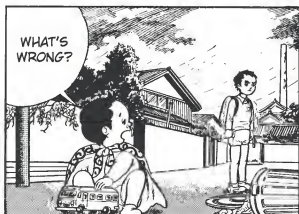
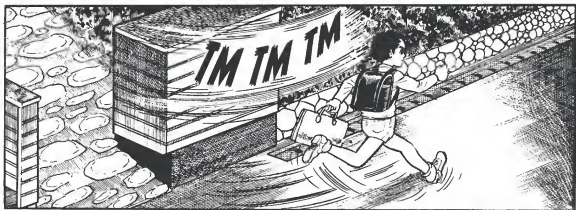
H-HOW DARE YOU?!



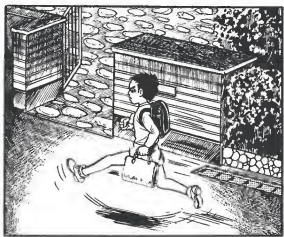
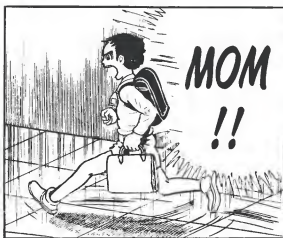








*SIGN=DISPOSE OF GARBAGE HERE

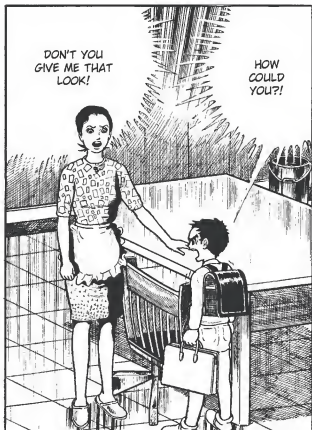




YOU THREW AWAY
EVERYTHING,
DIDN'T YOU?



OF COURSE. THOSE
WEIRD WIRES... SNAKE
SKINS... PIECES OF
RUSTY METAL...



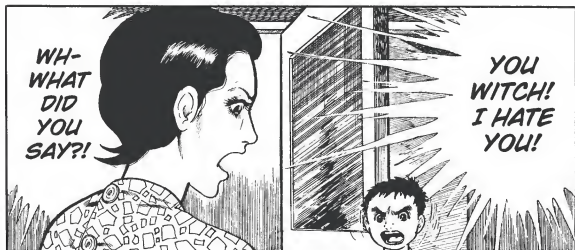
DON'T YOU
GIVE ME THAT
LOOK!

HOW
COULD
YOU?!



I CAN'T BELIEVE
YOU HAD THAT!
DON'T THINK I
CAN'T TELL
WHAT IT IS!

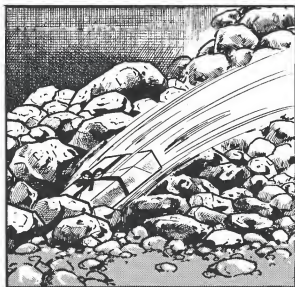
AND GUNPOWDER! DO
YOU WANT TO BLOW
OFF YOUR FINGERS?

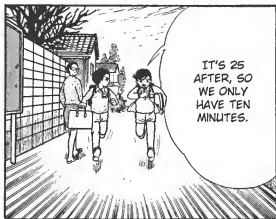
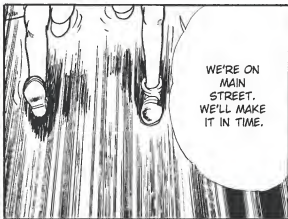
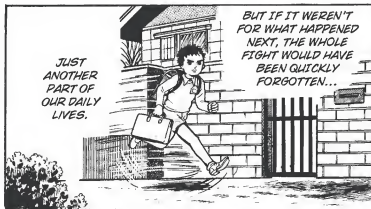


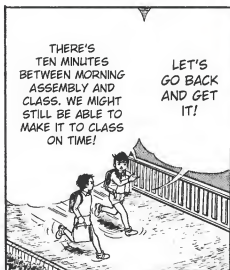
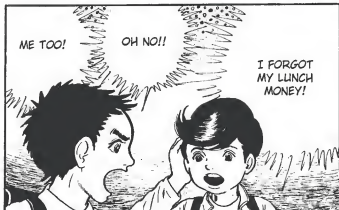
WH-
WHAT
DID
YOU
SAY?!

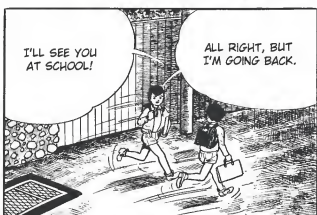
YOU
WITCH!
I HATE
YOU!

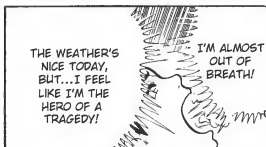
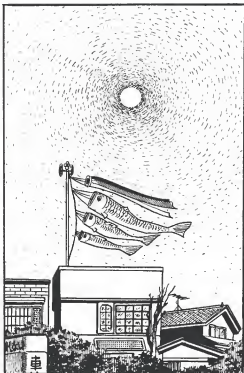
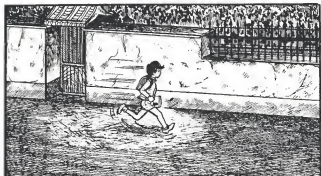


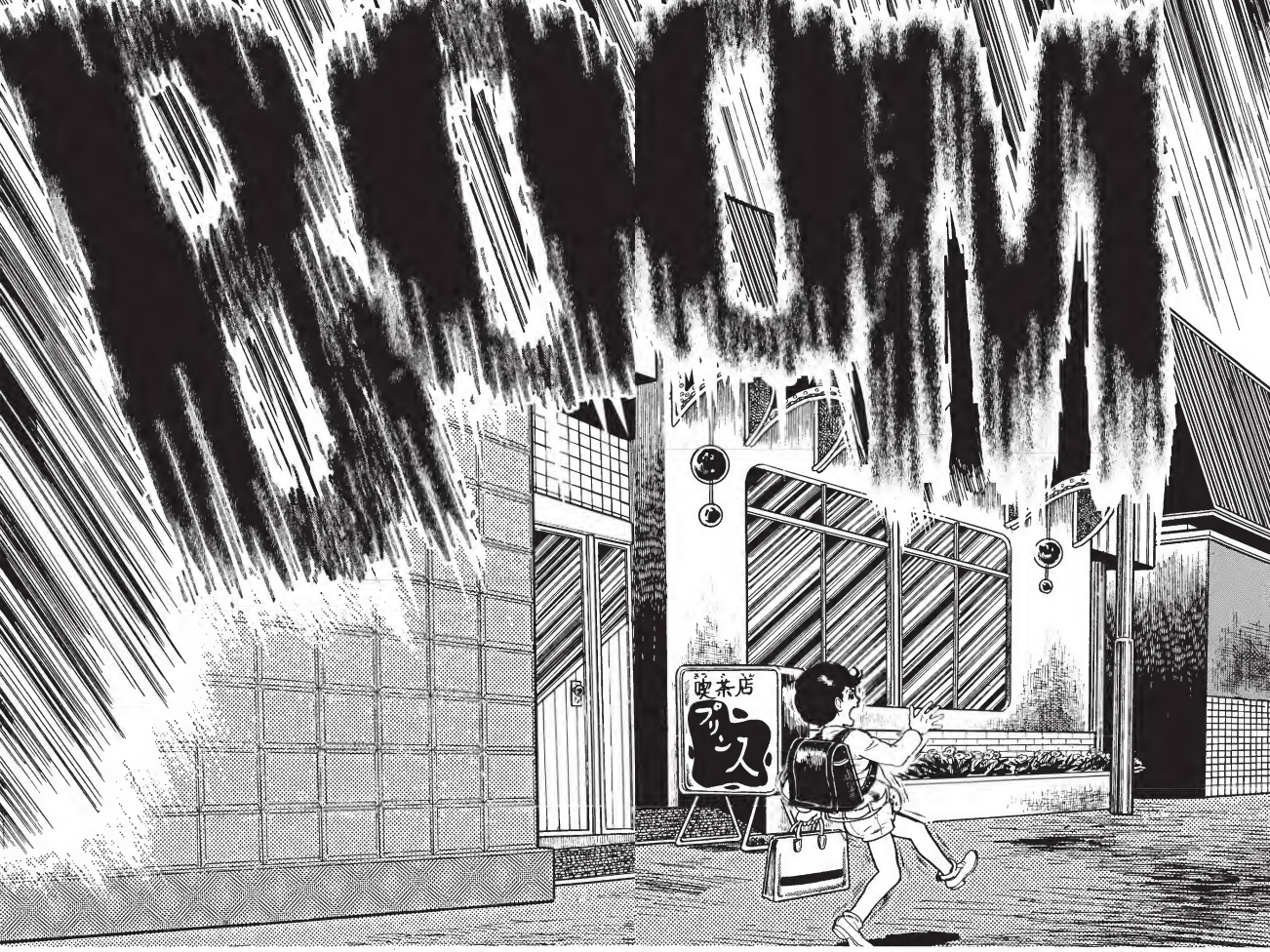
















I HAVE
TO SEE!!



*SIGN=YAMATO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



DID SOMETHING
HAPPEN TO
THE SCHOOL?
NO WAY!



WHAT'S IT
DOING
HERE...!?

TH-THIS
IS...THE
SCHOOL
SIGN!

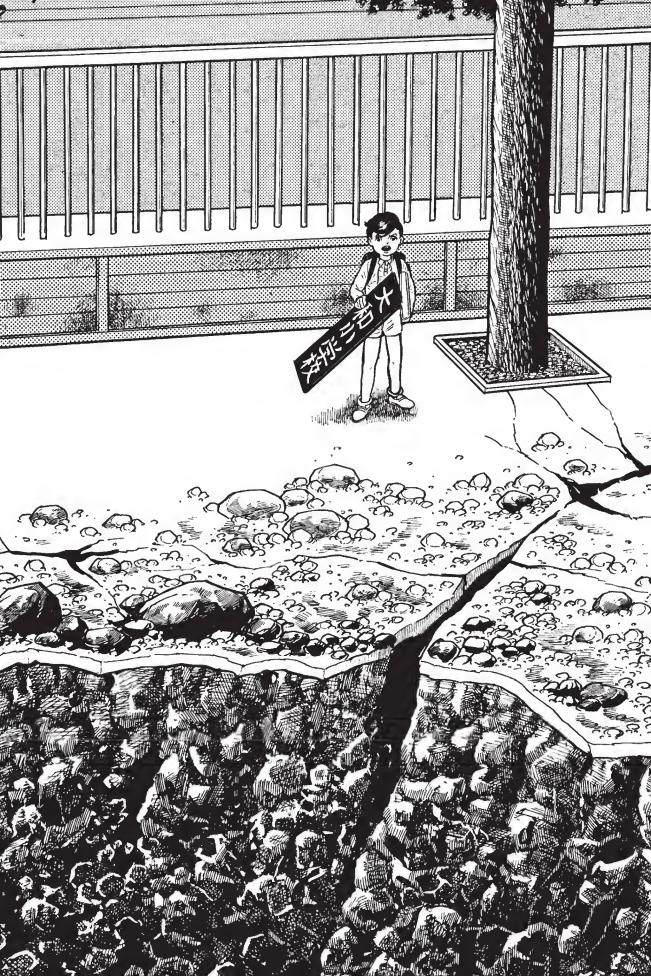


HUH
?!



SHO
!!

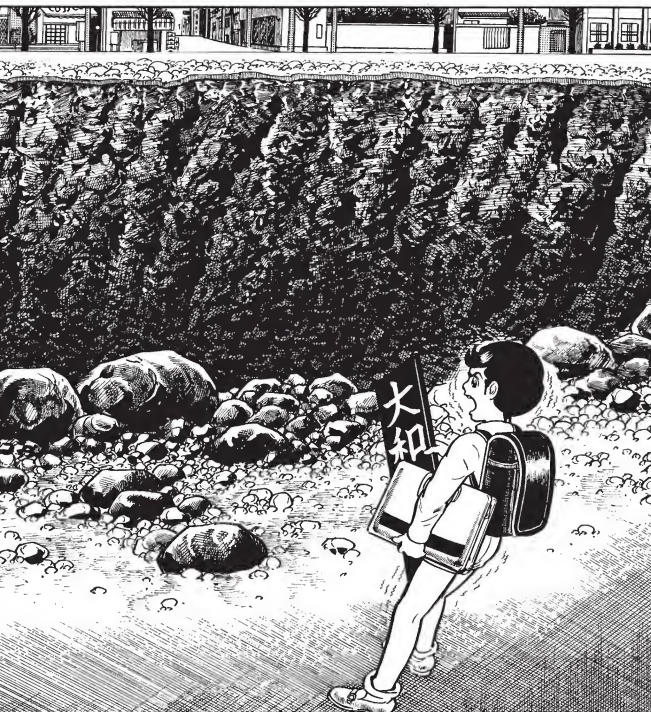








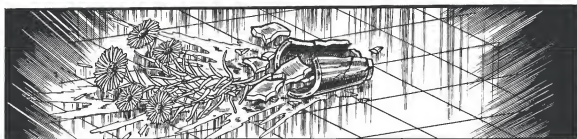
THE
SCHOOL'S
GONE!!

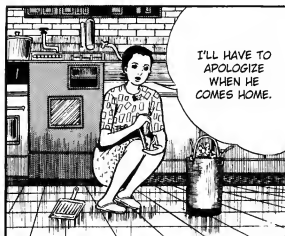
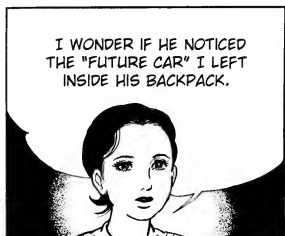


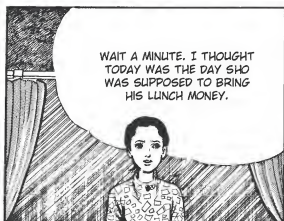


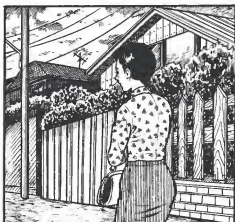
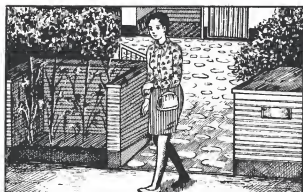
CHAPTER 2:

THE QUAKE



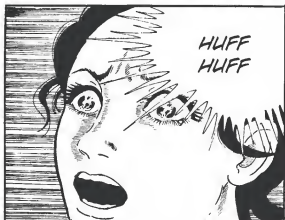
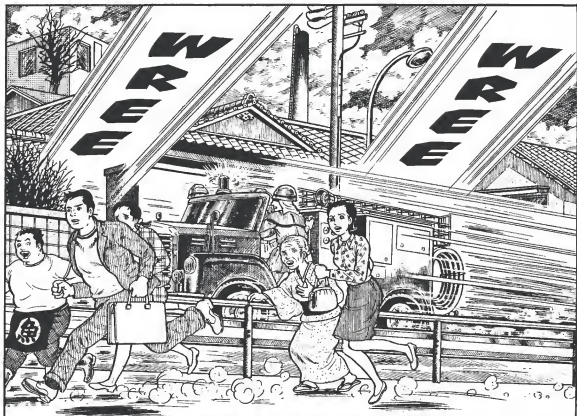


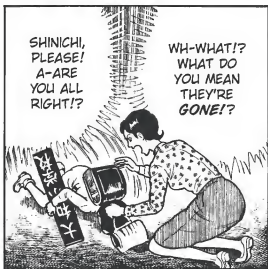




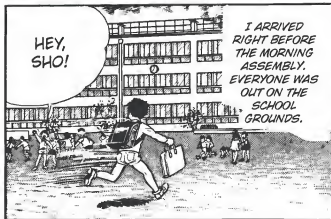
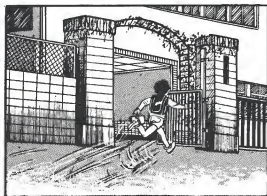
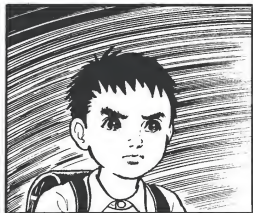
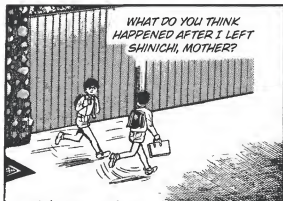


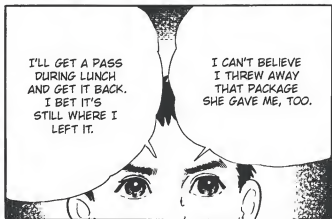
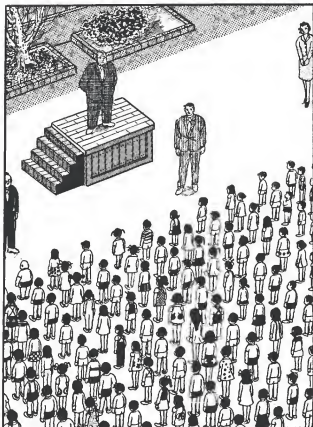


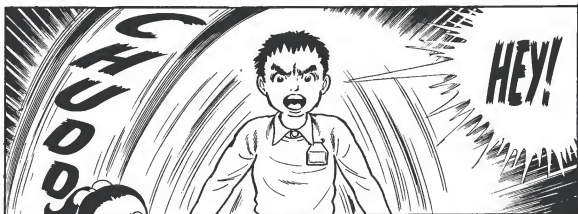


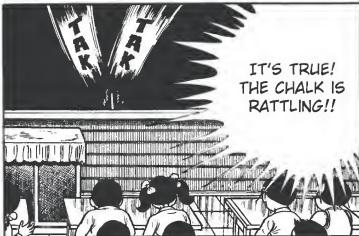
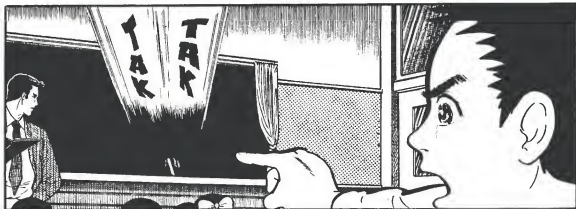


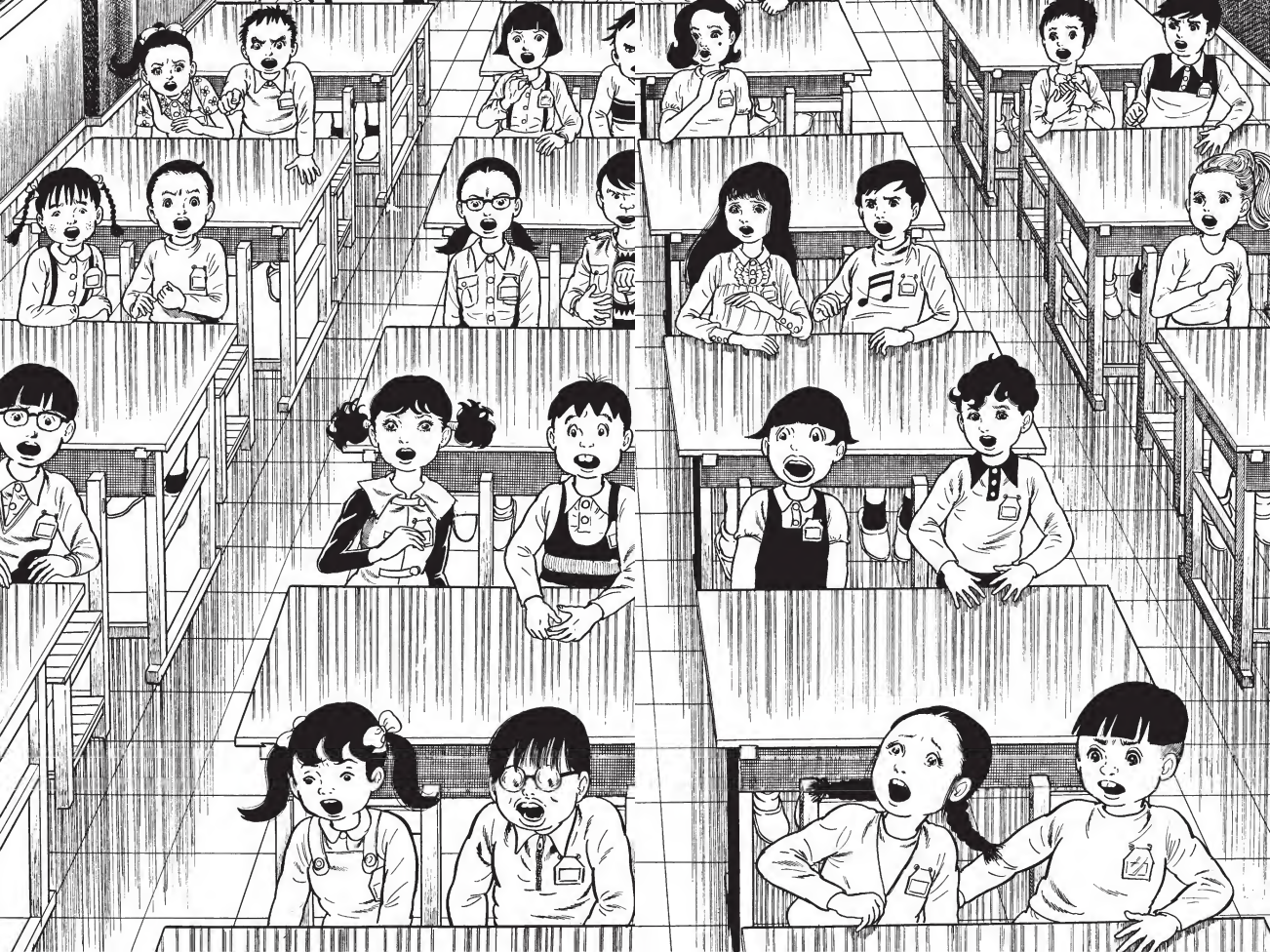


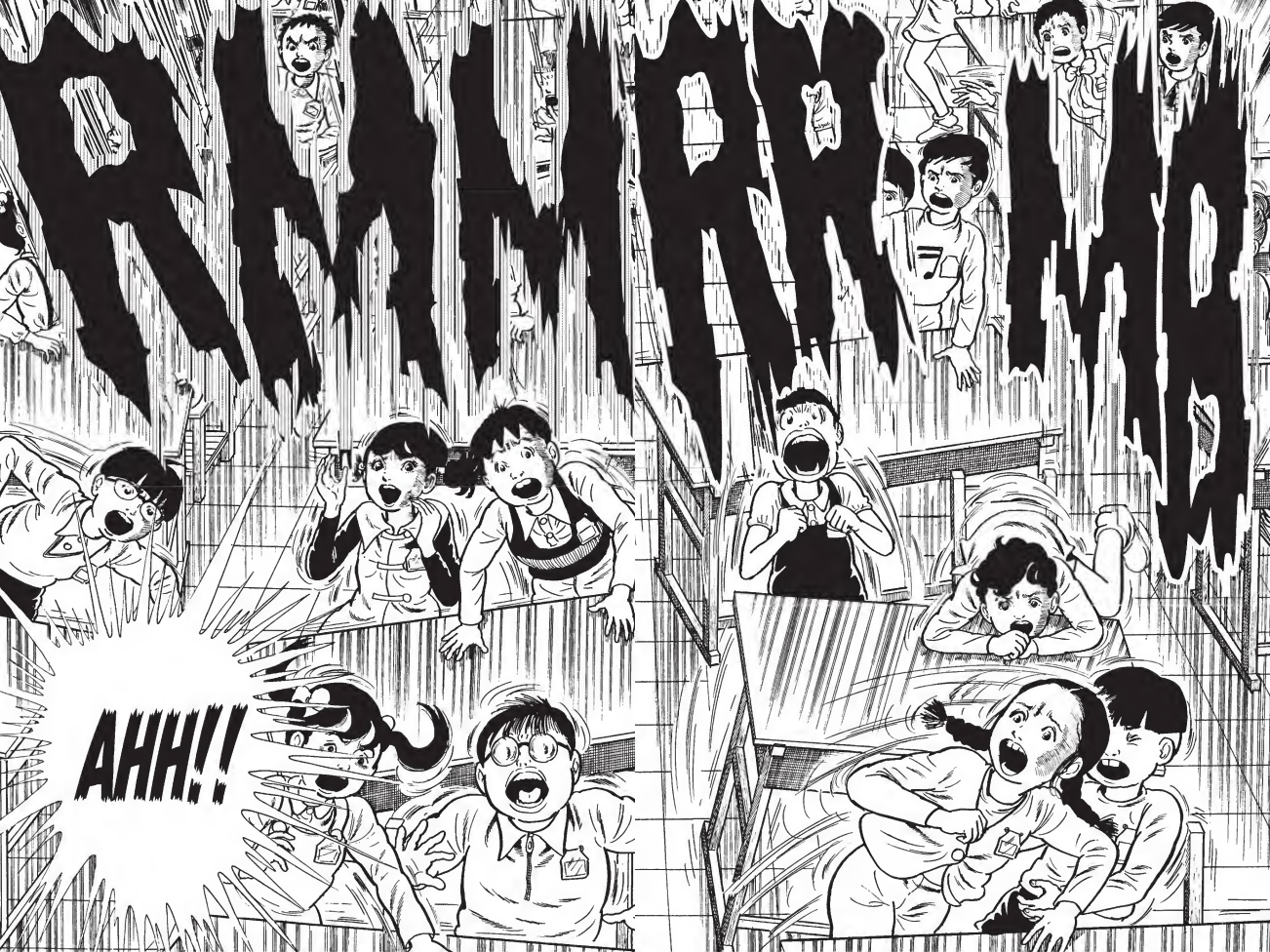




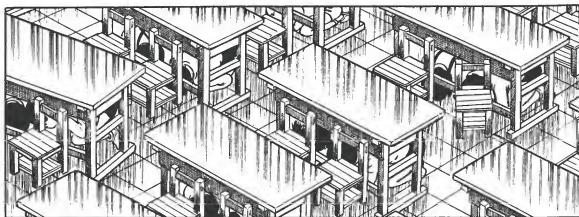
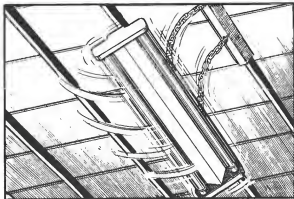
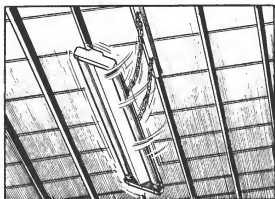


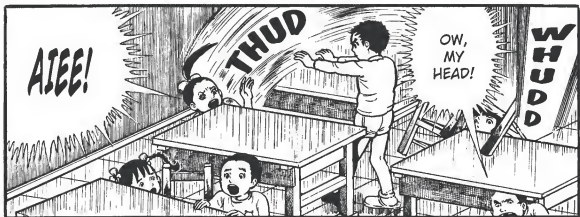
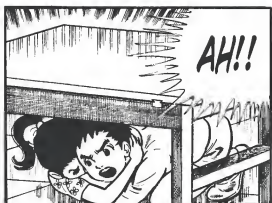




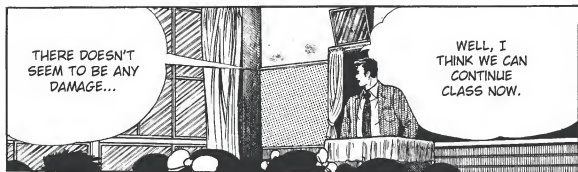


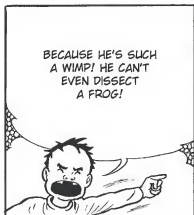


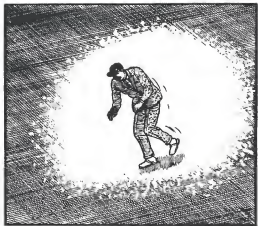
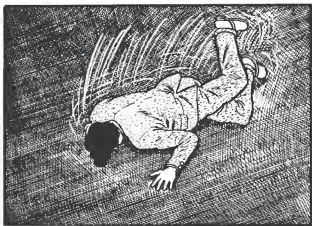


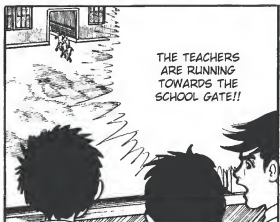
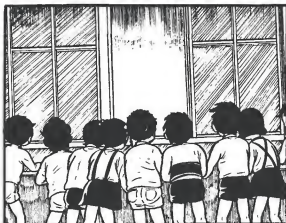
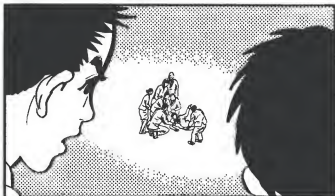
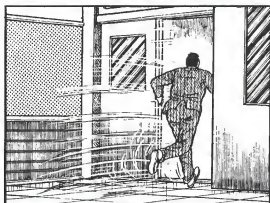
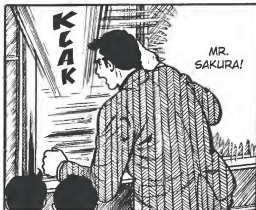


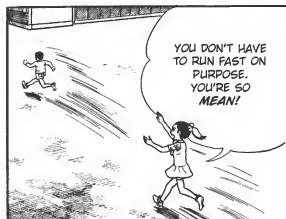
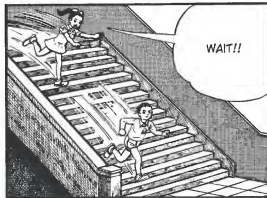
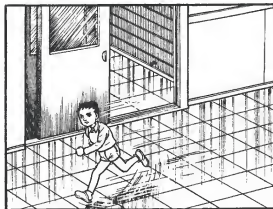
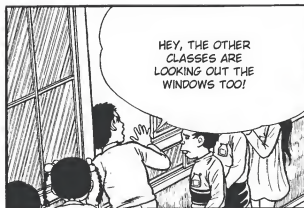


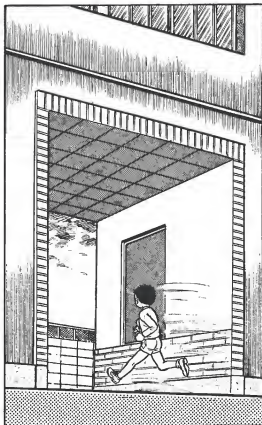
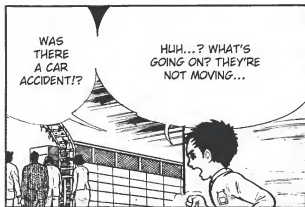


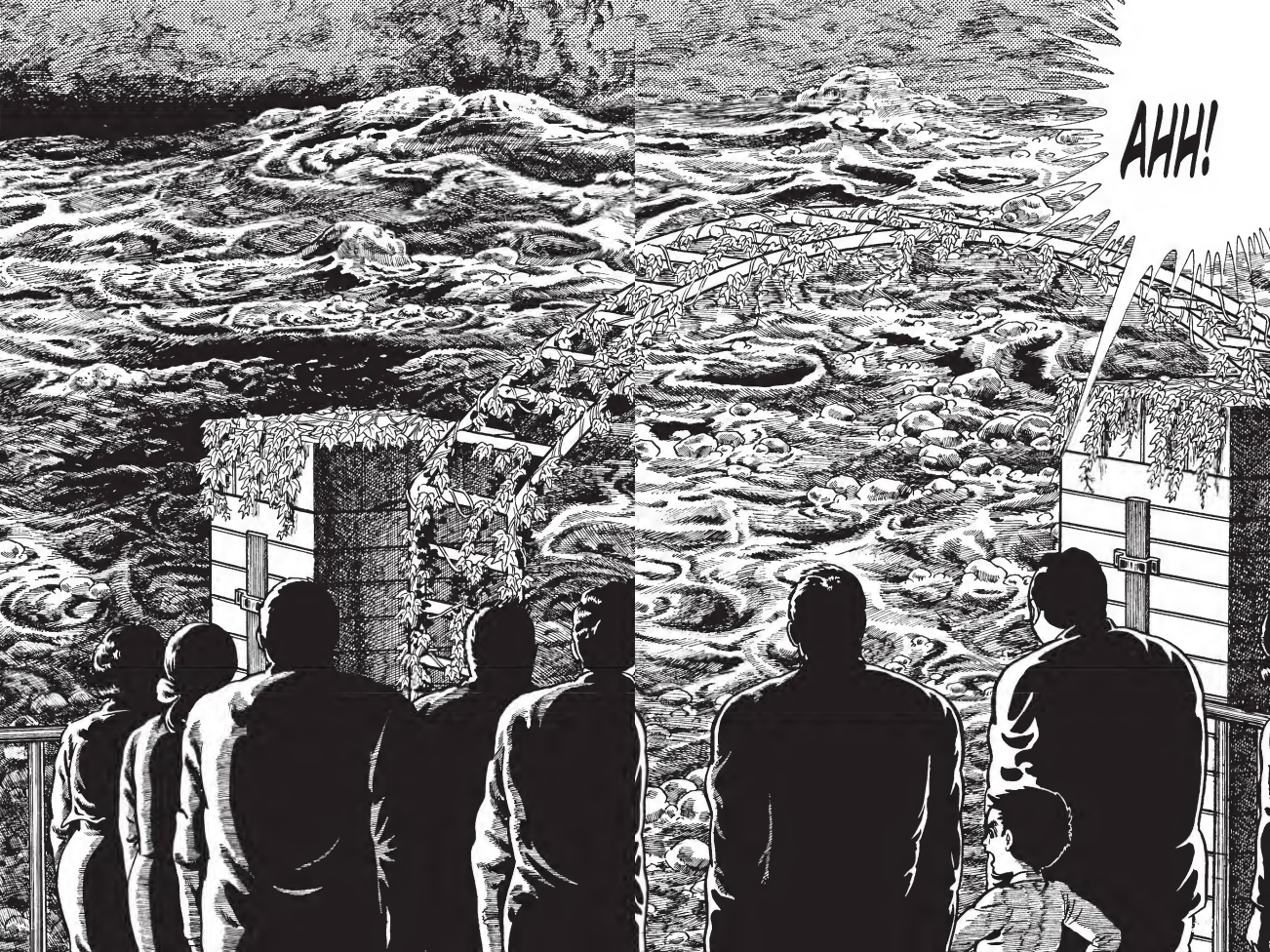




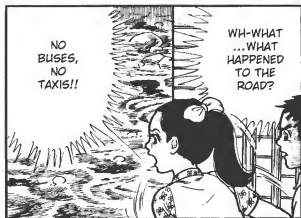
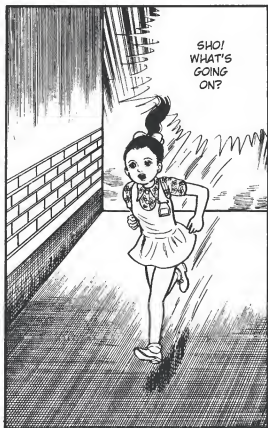
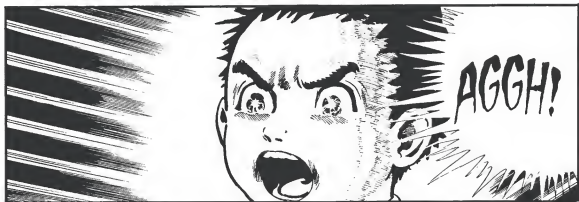




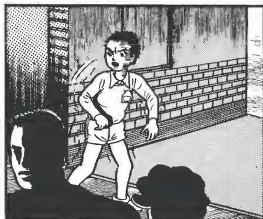


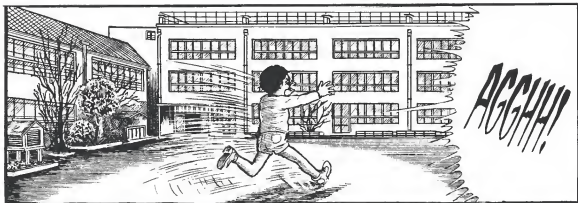






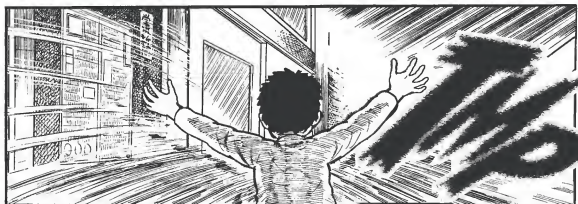
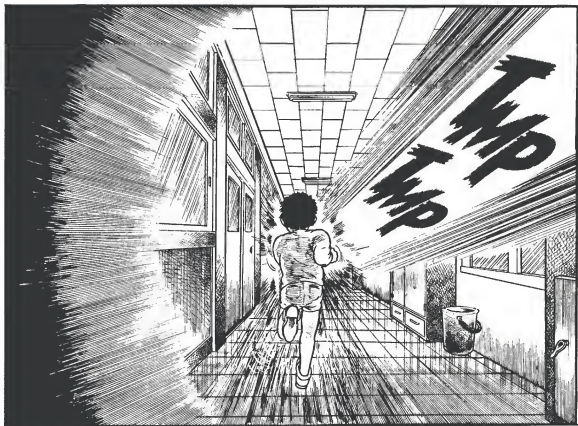
WH-WHAT
...WHAT
HAPPENED
TO THE ROAD?

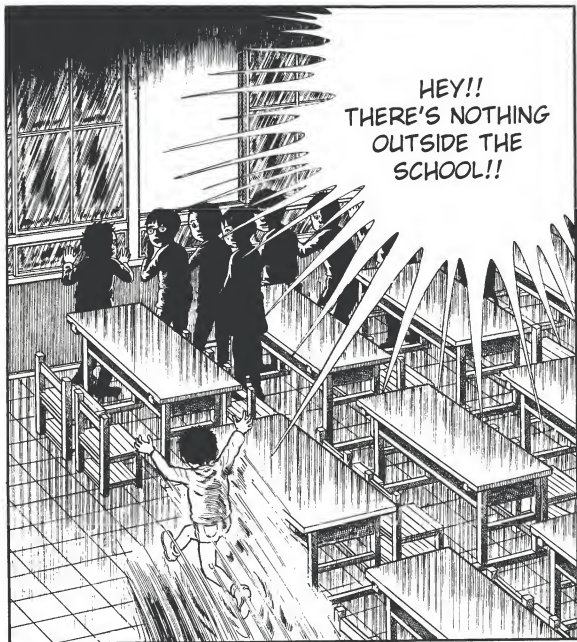




**EVERYTHING
OUTSIDE THE
SCHOOL IS
GONE!!**



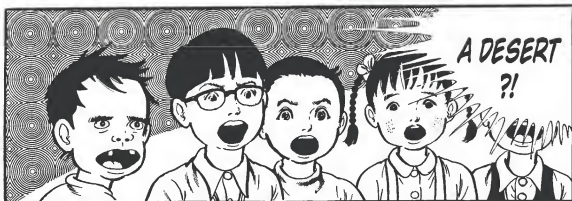


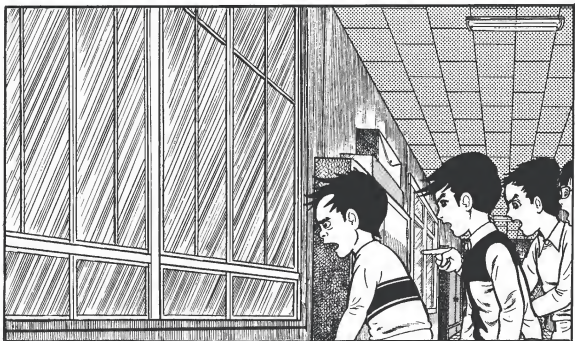
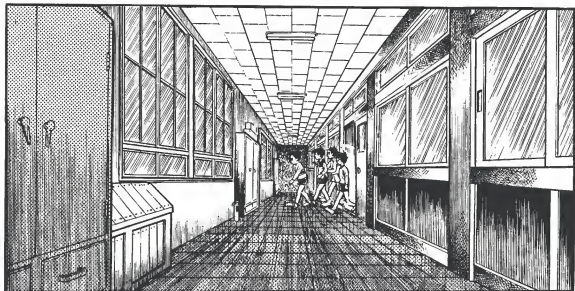
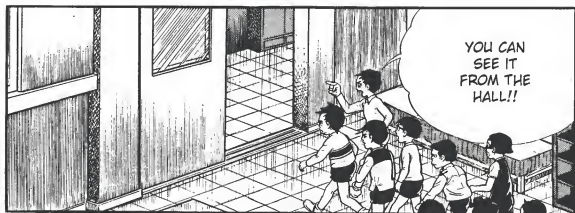


HEY!!
THERE'S NOTHING
OUTSIDE THE
SCHOOL!!



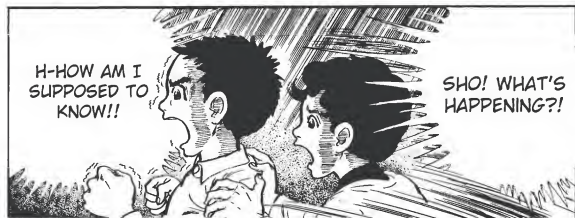
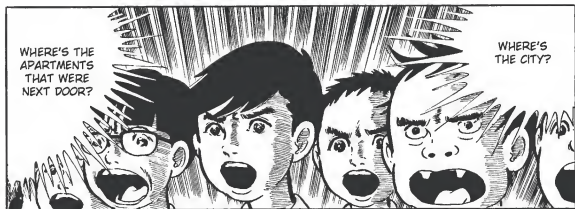
THE BUILDINGS,
ROADS AND
PEOPLE--THEY'RE
ALL GONE!!

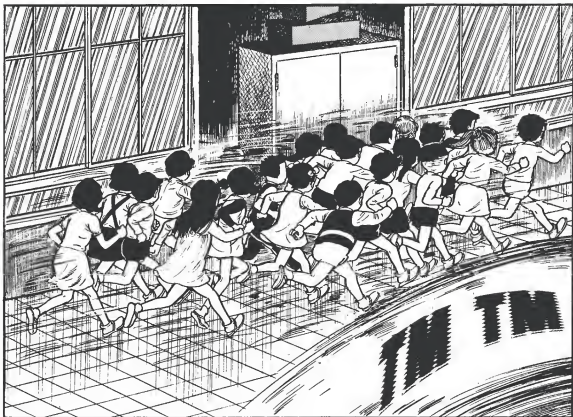
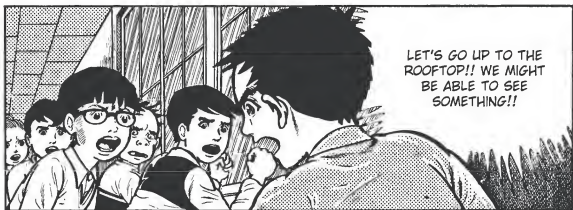


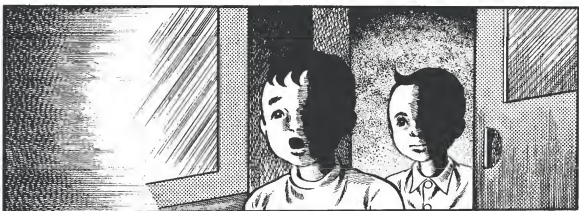
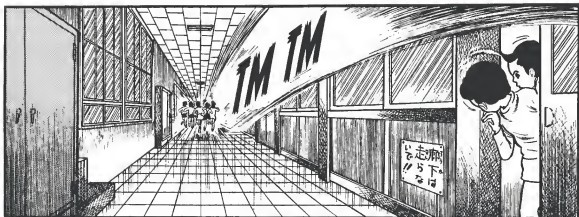


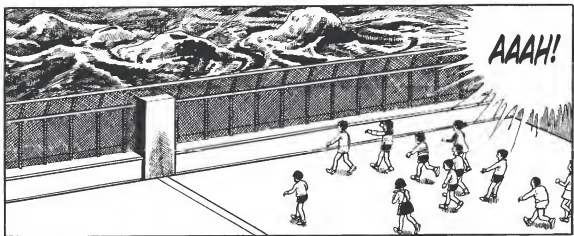
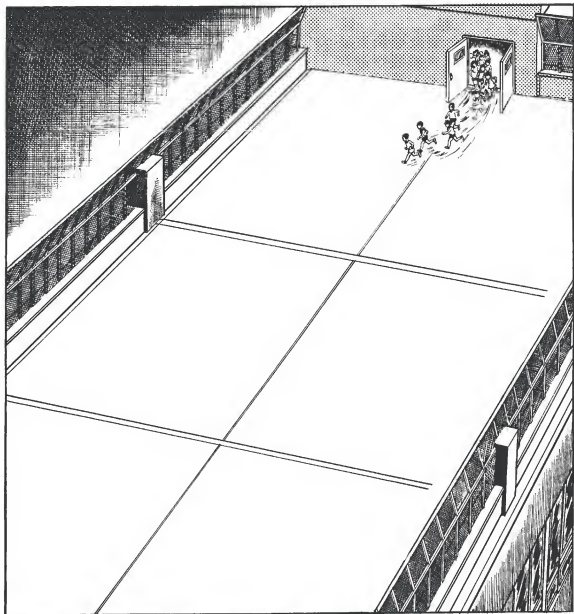


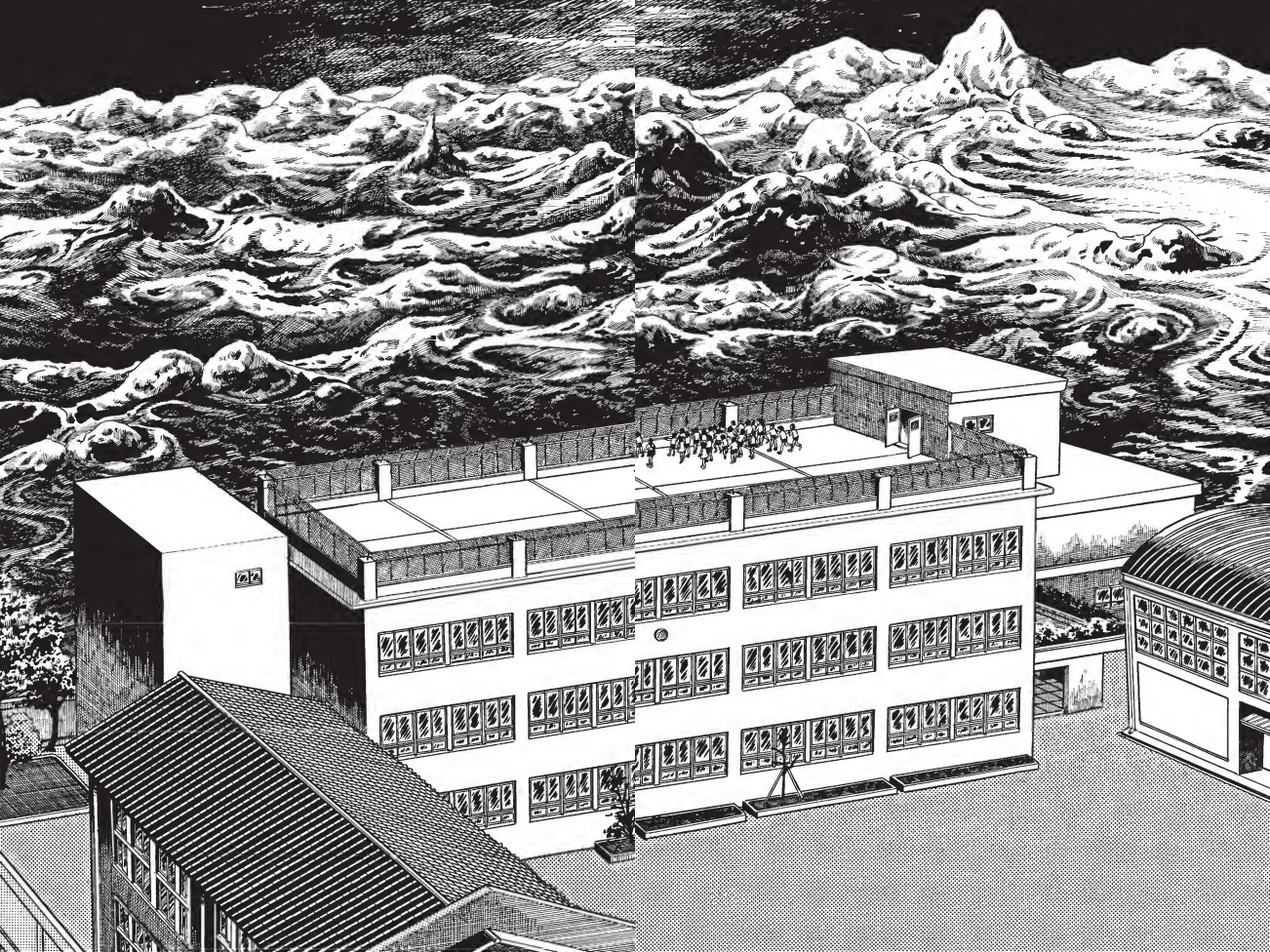




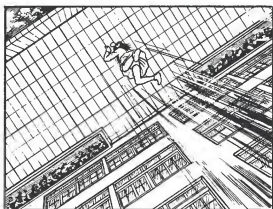
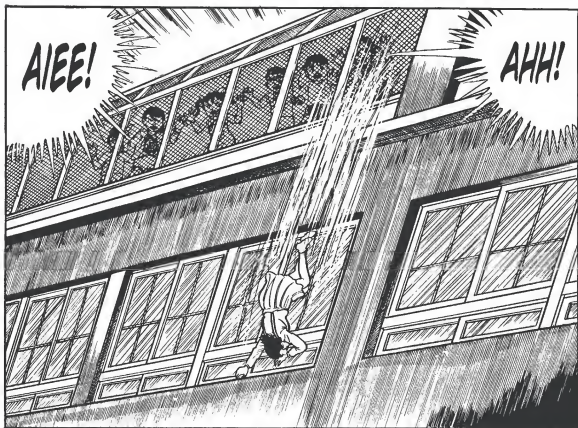


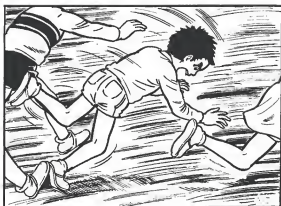
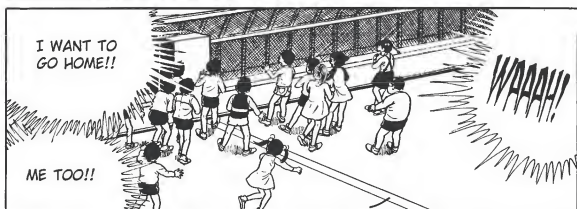


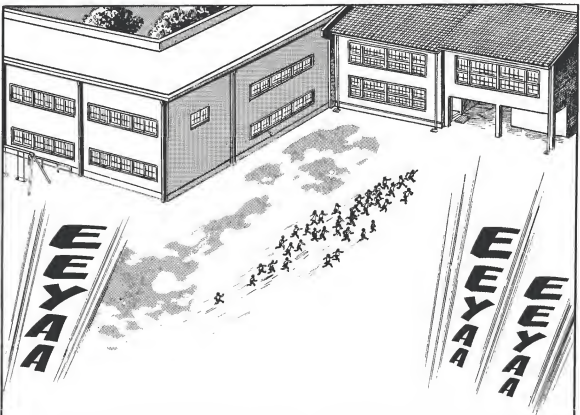
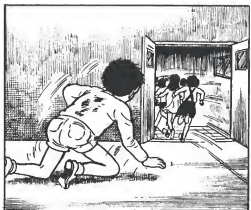
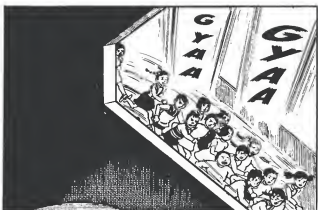




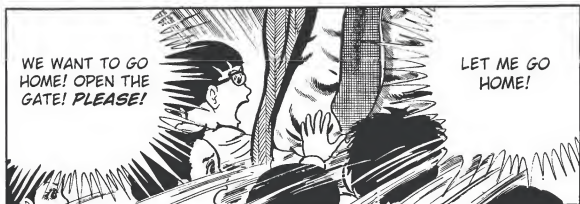












WE WANT TO GO
HOME! OPEN THE
GATE! PLEASE!

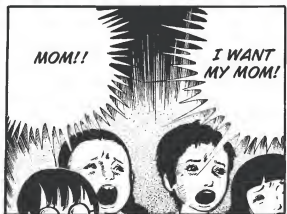
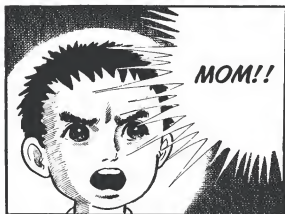
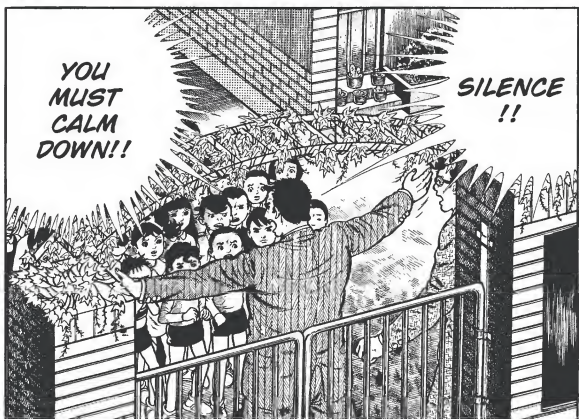
LET ME GO
HOME!

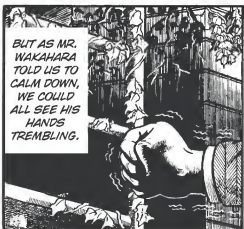
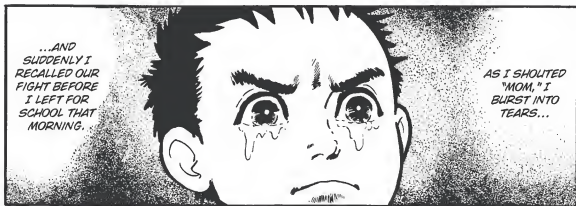


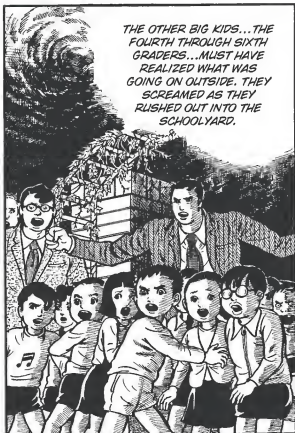
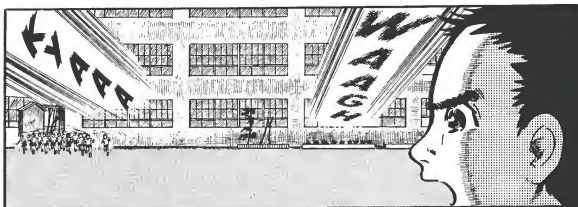
DO YOU
STILL WANT
TO GO!?

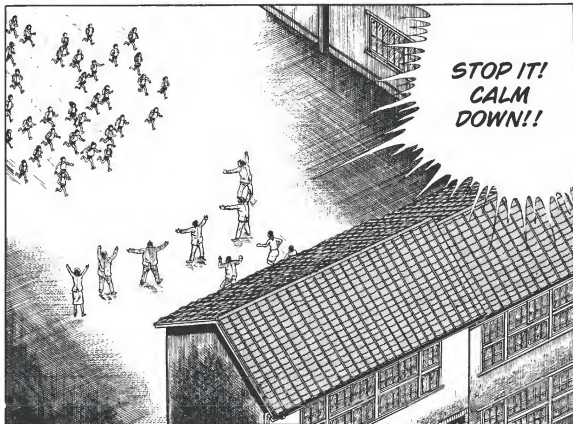
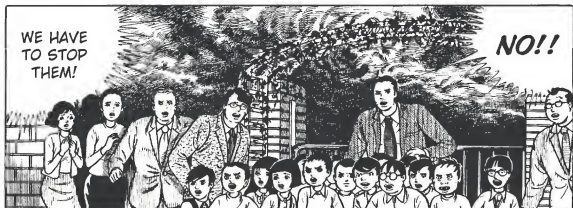
**SHUT UP!! IF
YOU LEAVE HERE,
YOU'LL DIE!**

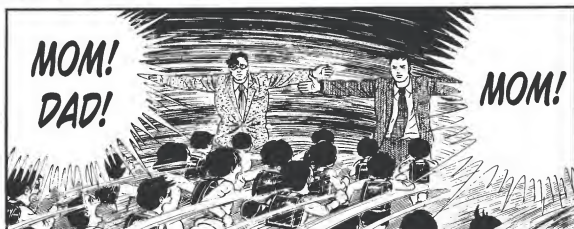


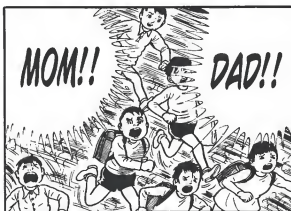






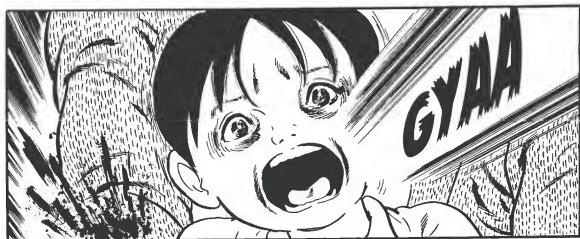
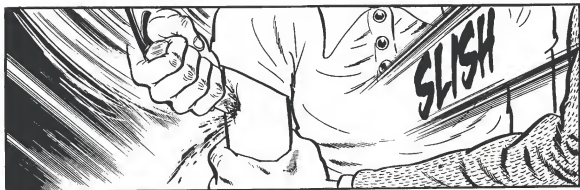






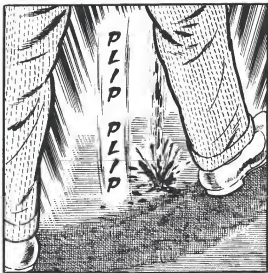




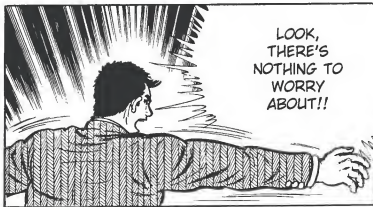


**NOW, WILL
YOU CALM
DOWN!!**



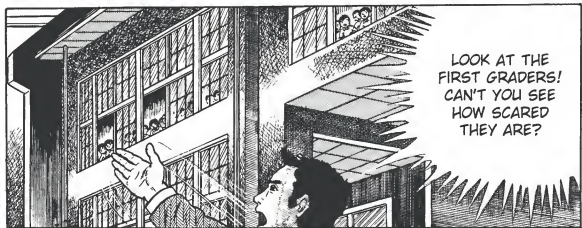




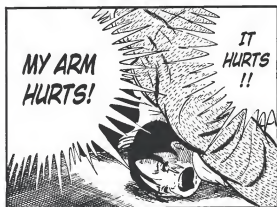
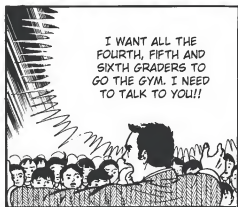
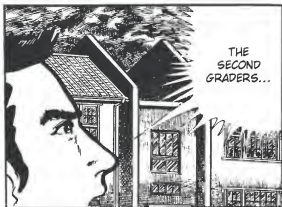
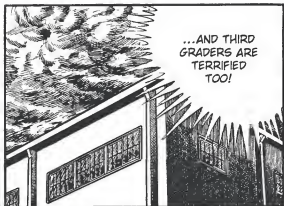




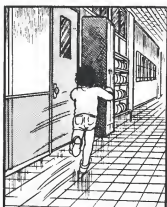
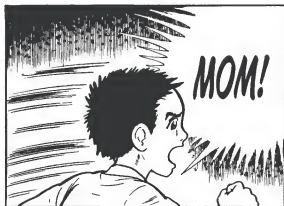
IF YOU KIDS IN
THE UPPER
GRADES DON'T
CALM DOWN,
WHAT ARE THE
YOUNGER KIDS
GOING TO DO!?

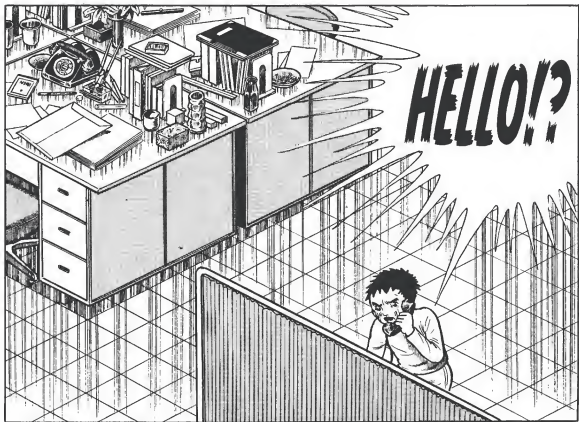


LOOK AT THE
FIRST GRADERS!
CAN'T YOU SEE
HOW SCARED
THEY ARE?

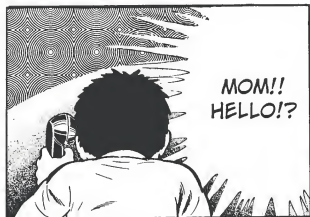


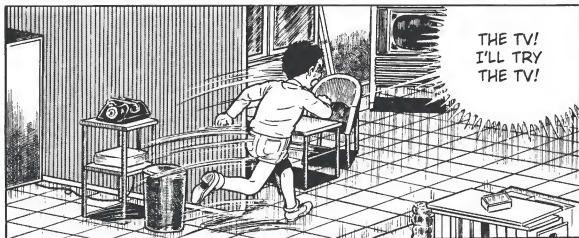
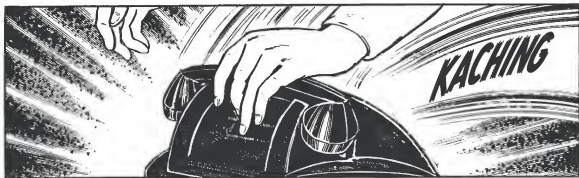
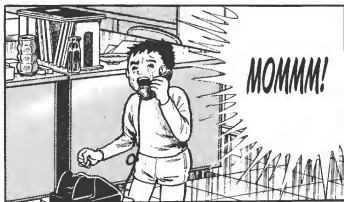


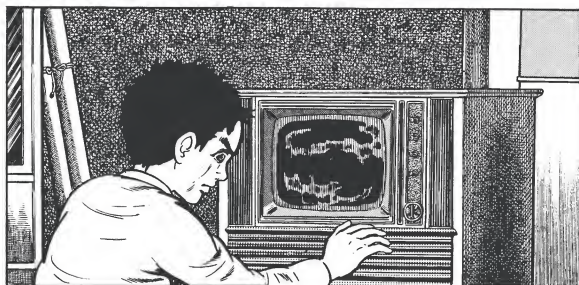
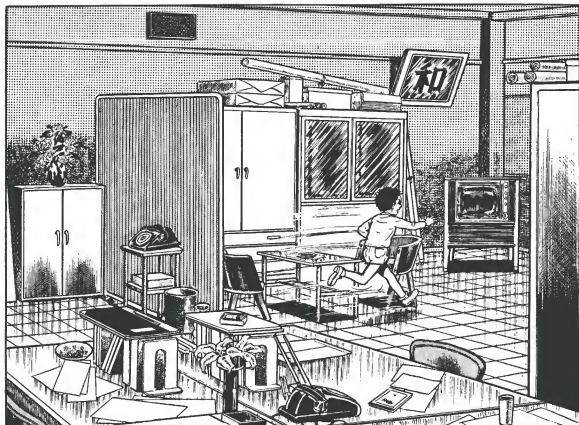


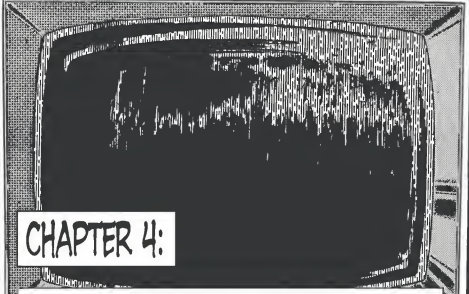


**HELLO,
MOM?**





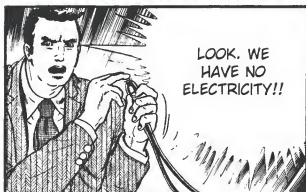


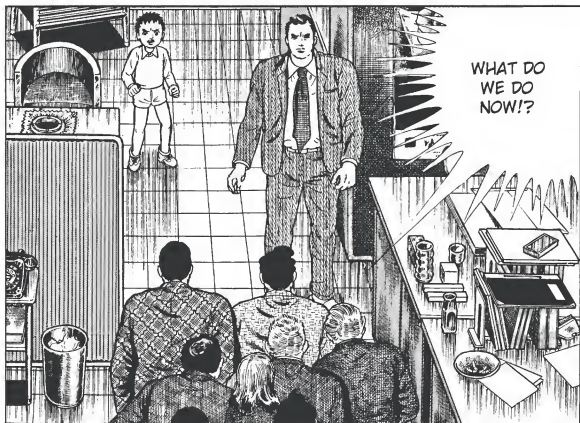


CHAPTER 4:

THE CLOSED WORLD





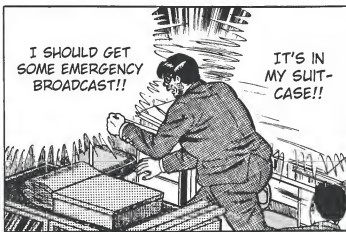
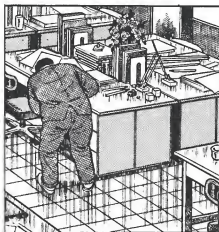


WHAT DO
WE DO
NOW!?



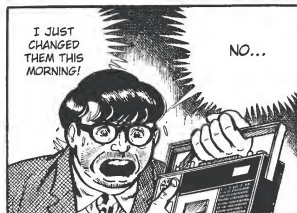
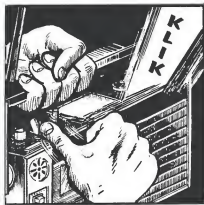
WHAT!?

H-HOLD ON!
I HAVE A
HANDHELD
RADIO!!

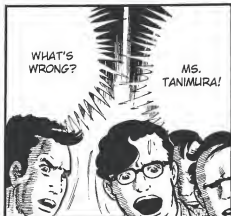
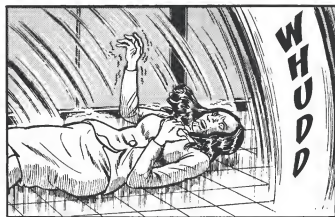
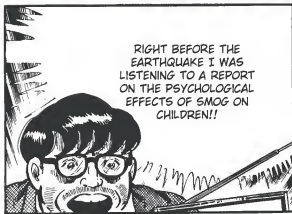
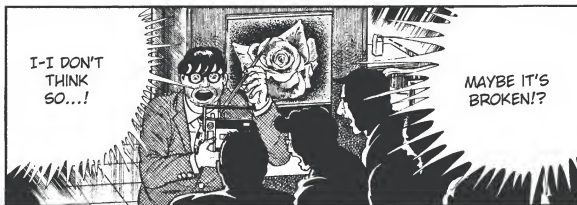


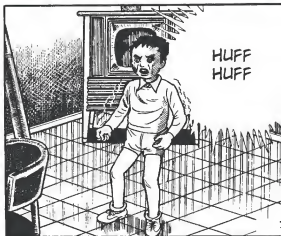
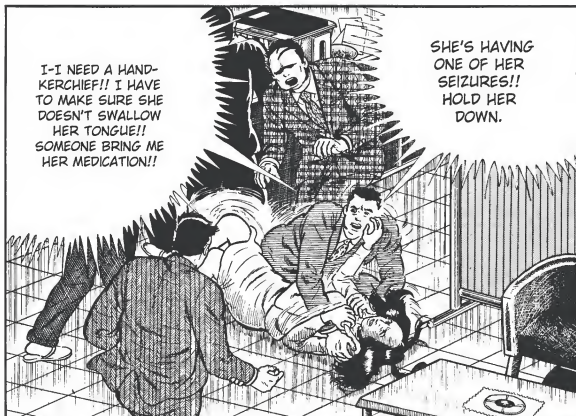
I SHOULD GET
SOME EMERGENCY
BROADCAST!!

IT'S IN
MY SUIT-
CASE!!







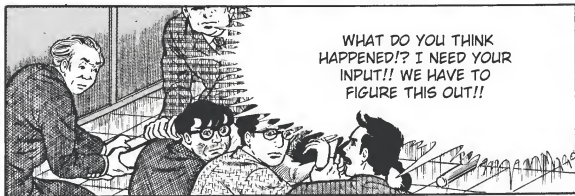




THE STUDENTS IN THE GYM OR
THE LOWER GRADES COULD
ERUPT AT ANY MOMENT! I
THINK WE'LL NEED MORE THAN
A FEW TEACHERS!!



WHAT DO YOU THINK
HAPPENED!? I NEED YOUR
INPUT!! WE HAVE TO
FIGURE THIS OUT!!



ASHES!?



BUT ONE THING
WE KNOW FOR
SURE IS THAT
EVERYTHING
AROUND US HAS
BEEN REDUCED
TO ASHES!!

I DON'T
KNOW.



NOT A SINGLE
BUILDING, PERSON
OR CAR...NOT
EVEN A TREE OR A
BLADE OF GRASS!



WHAT ELSE
COULD HAVE
HAPPENED?
HOW ELSE CAN
YOU DESCRIBE
WHAT'S OUT
THERE?

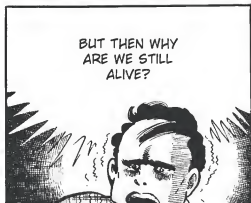


IT CAN'T
BE...!!



IT CAN'T
BE...

TH-
THEN...!!



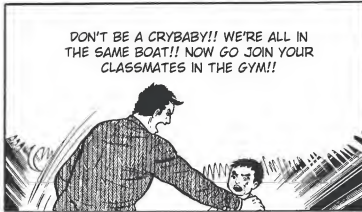
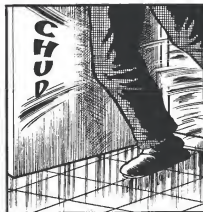
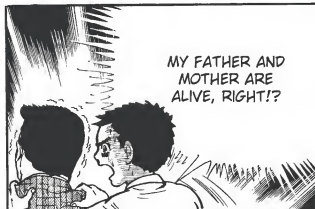
BUT THEN WHY
ARE WE STILL
ALIVE?



I DON'T KNOW!
BUT WE ARE!



IT'S TOO
DANGEROUS
FOR US TO
STEP OUTSIDE
THIS SCHOOL!!



AH!!



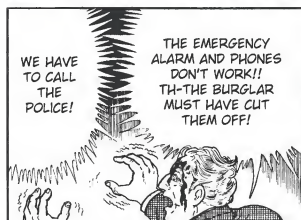
SIR!
WH-WHAT
HAPPENED
?!





I-I WAS
ATTACKED
!!











WE COULD
CARE LESS
ABOUT OUR
PAY. NONE OF
THE PHONES
WORK!!

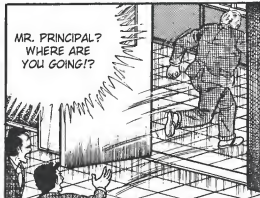
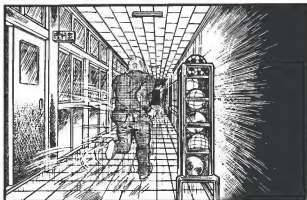


WHAT'S
THAT!?

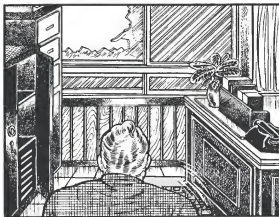


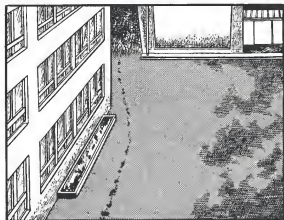
THERE'S NO
PHONE
LINES, NO
TELEPHONE
POLES, NO
TELEPHONE
COMPANY!

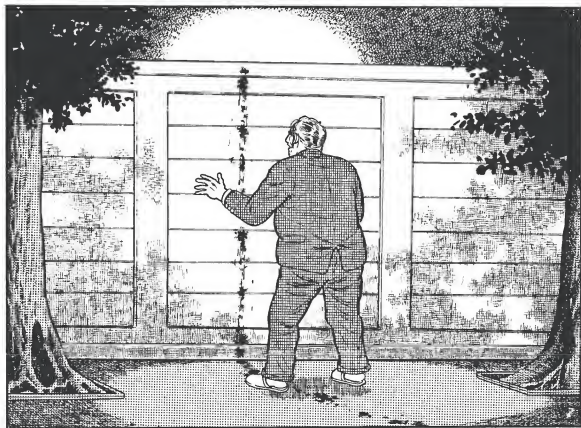
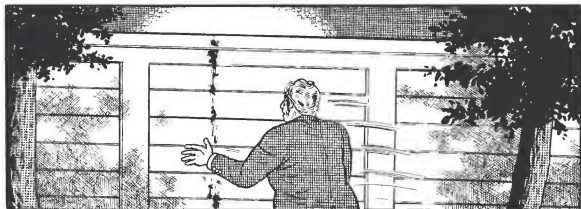
HA HA HA...YOU'RE
CLUELESS. HOW
COULD YOU NOT HAVE
NOTICED WHAT
HAPPENED?

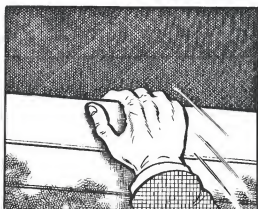
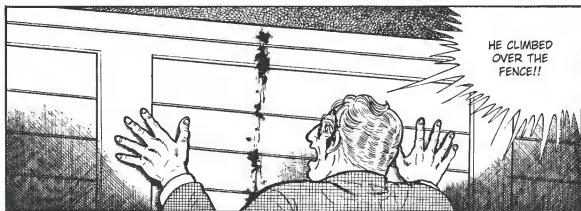


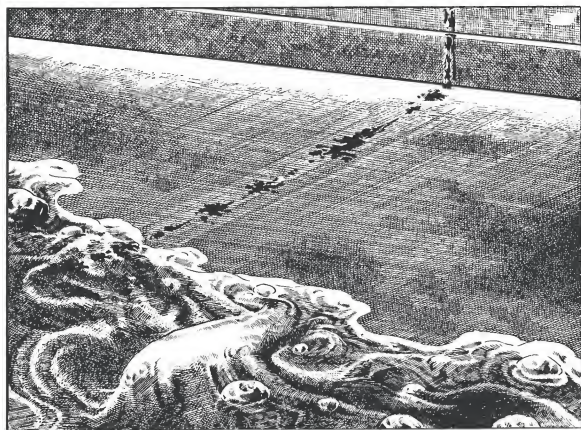
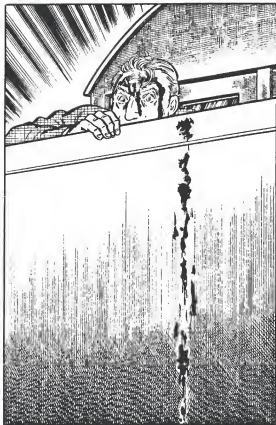
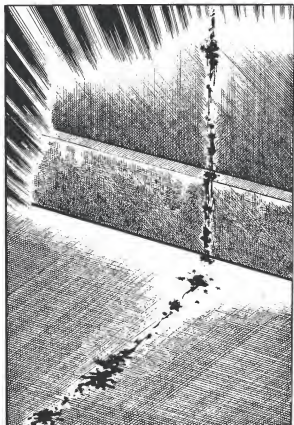
MR. PRINCIPAL?
WHERE ARE
YOU GOING!?



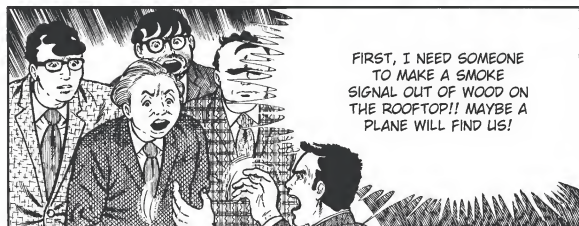
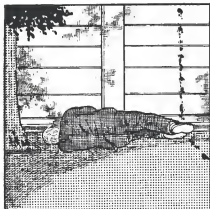


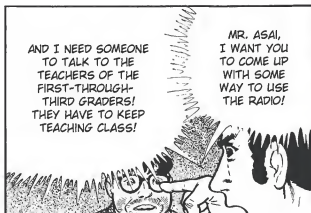












AND I NEED SOMEONE
TO TALK TO THE
TEACHERS OF THE
FIRST-THROUGH-
THIRD GRADERS!
THEY HAVE TO KEEP
TEACHING CLASS!

MR. ASAI,
I WANT YOU
TO COME UP
WITH SOME
WAY TO USE
THE RADIO!



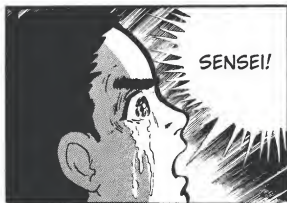
WE ALSO NEED
TO CHECK THE
GAS AND WATER!



TAKAMATSU,
YOU GO
BACK TO
THE GYM!!



I'LL CHECK
TO SEE IF IT'S
SAFE TO GO
OUTSIDE!!



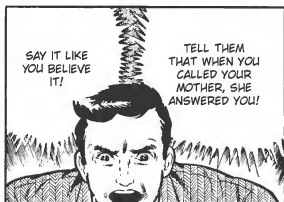
SENSEI!

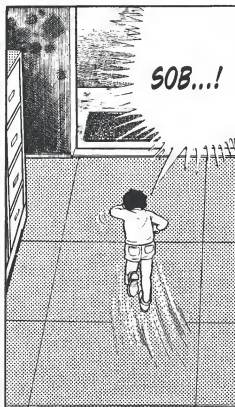
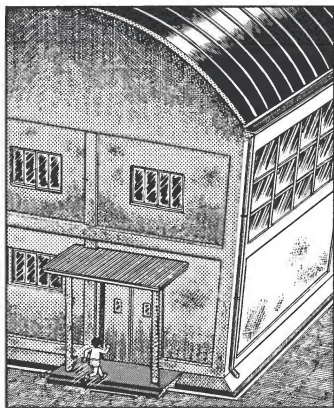
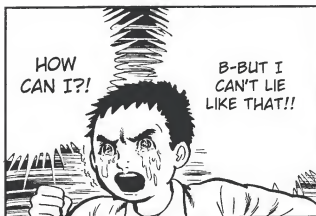


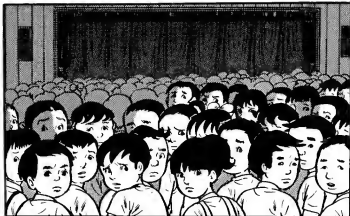
B-BUT OUR
PARENTS...
ARE THEY...?



I WANT YOU TO
TELL THEM THAT
THEIR PARENTS
ARE ALIVE!!



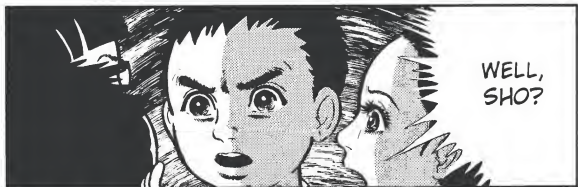








WHAT ELSE
DID YOU
TALK
ABOUT!?



WELL,
SHO?



I ASKED HER
WHERE SHE
WAS...

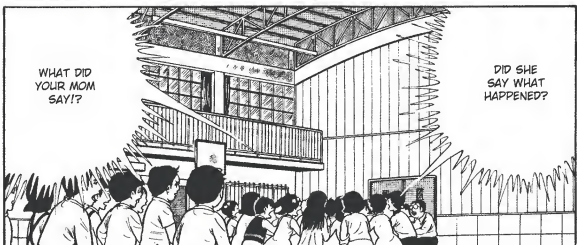
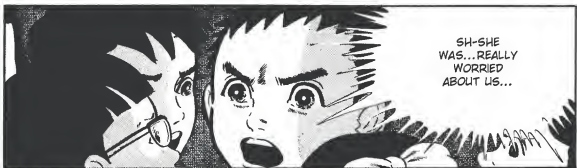


D-DID SHE
SAY WHERE
SHE WAS?

OOOH!

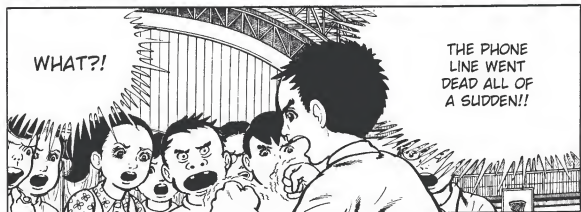


SH-SHE
SAID...





I-I DON'T
KNOW!!

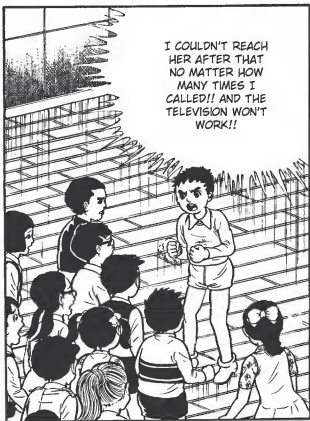


WHAT?!

THE PHONE
LINE WENT
DEAD ALL OF
A SUDDEN!!



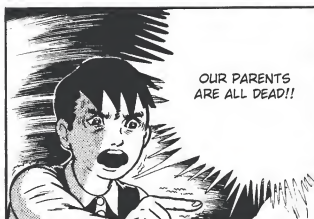
YOU'RE
LYING!!



I COULDN'T REACH
HER AFTER THAT
NO MATTER HOW
MANY TIMES I
CALLED!! AND THE
TELEVISION WON'T
WORK!!



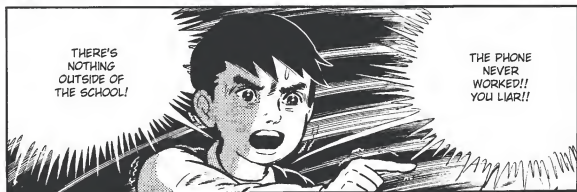
YOU'RE FULL OF IT.
THE PHONE DIDN'T
WORK AT ALL!!
YOU'RE LYING
ABOUT REACHING
YOUR MOM!!



OUR PARENTS
ARE ALL DEAD!!



I AM
NOT!!



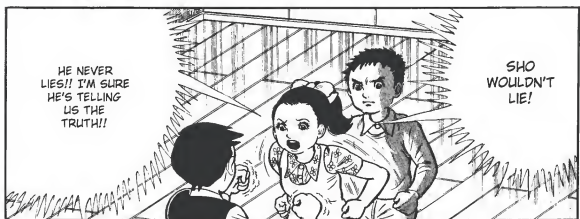
THERE'S
NOTHING
OUTSIDE OF
THE SCHOOL!

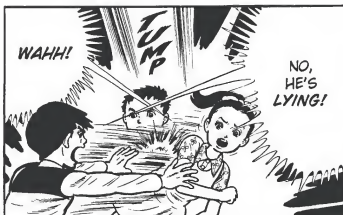
THE PHONE
NEVER
WORKED!!
YOU LIAR!!

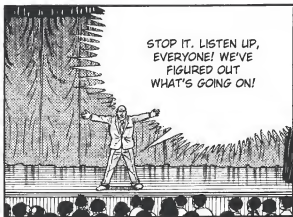


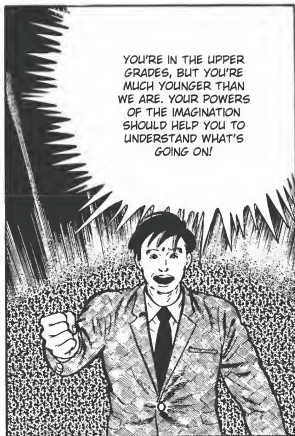
I'M NOT
LYING!!

I-I'M TELLING
THE TRUTH!!









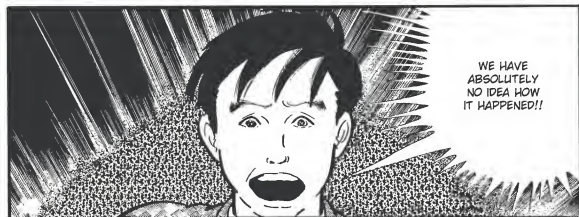
YOU'RE IN THE UPPER GRADES, BUT YOU'RE MUCH YOUNGER THAN WE ARE. YOUR POWERS OF THE IMAGINATION SHOULD HELP YOU TO UNDERSTAND WHAT'S GOING ON!



THE PRINCIPAL IS ILL SO I'LL HAVE TO EXPLAIN!!



SOMETHING UNBELIEVABLE HAS HAPPENED TO US!!



WE HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO IDEA HOW IT HAPPENED!!



...IT SEEMS
WE'VE BEEN
TELEPORTED TO
AN UNKNOWN
AREA!

ALL WE
KNOW
IS...



THAT'S
RIGHT!!



TELEPORTED?!



WE WILL
EVENTUALLY.



BUT WE
DON'T KNOW
WHERE!

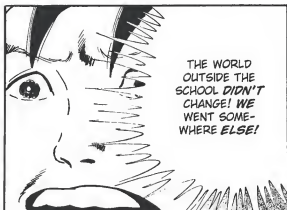


IT WAS VERY
BRIEF...BUT IT
WAS A JAPANESE
NEWS STATION
REPORTING OUR
DISAPPEARANCE!!

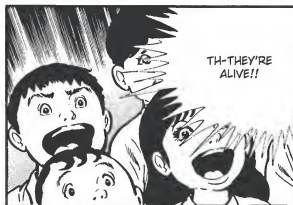
I SAY THIS
BECAUSE WE
RECEIVED
A RADIO
SIGNAL...



SO YOUR
PARENTS
ARE
ALIVE!!

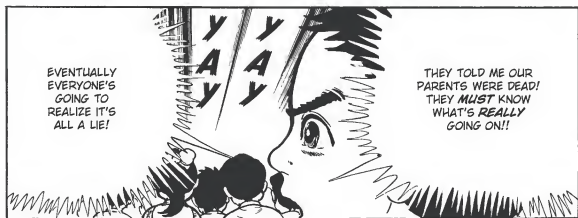
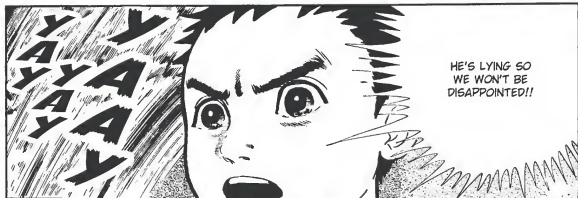


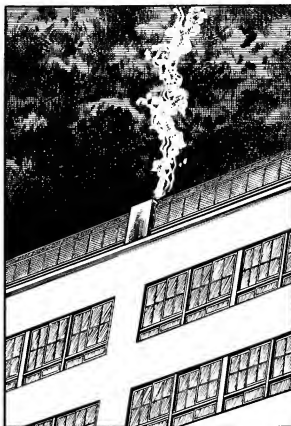
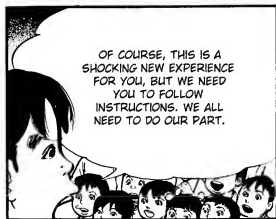
THE WORLD
OUTSIDE THE
SCHOOL DIDN'T
CHANGE! WE
WENT SOME-
WHERE ELSE!

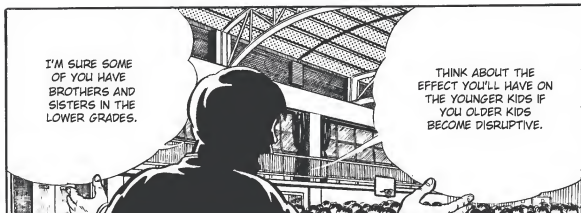


TH-THEY'RE
ALIVE!!









I'M SURE SOME
OF YOU HAVE
BROTHERS AND
SISTERS IN THE
LOWER GRADES.

THINK ABOUT THE
EFFECT YOU'LL HAVE ON
THE YOUNGER KIDS IF
YOU OLDER KIDS
BECOME DISRUPTIVE.



YOU HAVE TO MAINTAIN
YOUR COMPOSURE SO THE
YOUNGER KIDS WON'T BE
SCARED! WE'LL FIND OUT
WHERE WE ARE AND MAKE
SURE WE'RE RESCUED!

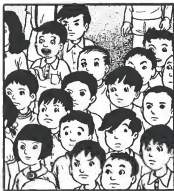


ONE LAST THING.
YOU MUST **NEVER**
LEAVE THE SCHOOL
PREMISES!!

NOW PLEASE
FOLLOW YOUR
TEACHERS
AND RETURN
TO YOUR
CLASSROOMS!

DO YOUR BEST TO
EXPLAIN THE SITUATION
TO YOUR YOUNGER
BROTHERS AND SISTERS!!
THAT'S ALL FOR NOW!!

I CAN'T
EXPLAIN
ANY MORE.



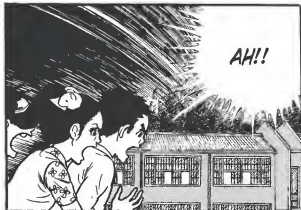
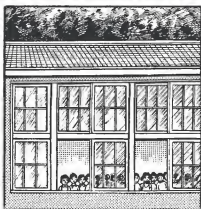
YES,
I DO.

DO YOU REALLY
THINK THE
STUDENTS WILL
BELIEVE SUCH A
PREPOSTEROUS
ANNOUNCEMENT?

THE OLDER KIDS HAVE DEVELOPED
SOME FACULTY OF JUDGMENT.
THE FIRST AND SECOND GRADERS
HAVE NO IDEA WHAT'S GOING ON.
WE HAVE TO WATCH OUT FOR THE
THIRD GRADERS THOUGH. THEY'RE
GOING TO BE A PROBLEM!!

IN ANY
CASE, THEY
MUSTN'T
KNOW THE
TRUTH!

THEY CAN HANDLE
EXTRAORDINARY
EVENTS. THINK OF ALL
THE THINGS THEY'VE
BEEN RAISED ON, THAT
THEY'VE SEEN ON TV...

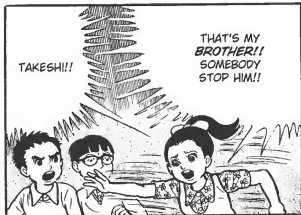








WHERE
ARE YOU
GOING?!!
COME
BACK!



TAKESHI!!

THAT'S MY
BROTHER!!
SOMEBODY
STOP HIM!!



WE'RE NOT
ALLOWED
TO!!

YOU CAN'T
GO OUTSIDE,
SAKI!!



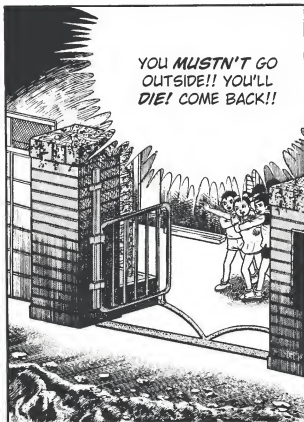
IT'S ME,
SAKI! CAN'T
YOU HEAR
ME!?

TAKESHI,
COME
BACK!!

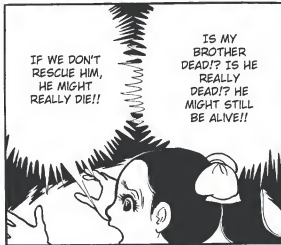
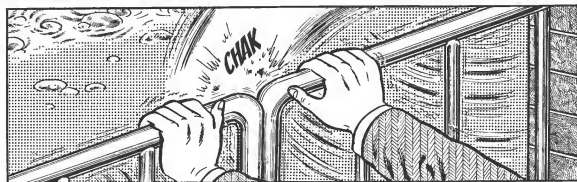
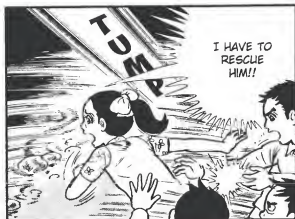


SAKI, I'M
GOING
HOME!!



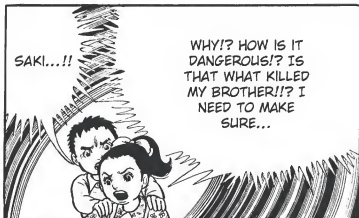








NO,
ABSOLUTELY
NOT!!



SAKI...!!

WHY!? HOW IS IT
DANGEROUS!? IS
THAT WHAT KILLED
MY BROTHER!? I
NEED TO MAKE
SURE...



I KNOW IT
SEEMS CRUEL,
BUT I CAN'T
LET YOU GO!

YOU SAW YOUR
BROTHER COLLAPSE!!
WE HAVE NO IDEA
WHAT HAPPENED
TO HIM!!

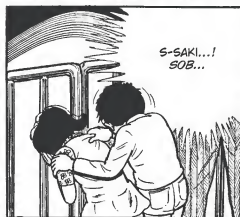


I SHOULD HAVE
LOOKED AFTER
YOU, BUT ALL I
CARED ABOUT
WAS GETTING
HOME MYSELF...

TAKESHI,
I'M SO
SORRY. YOU
WANTED TO
GO HOME!



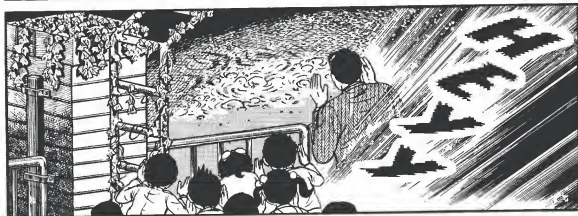
TAKESHI
!!

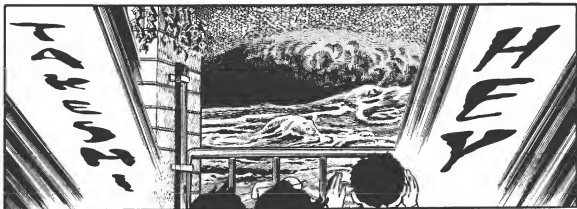


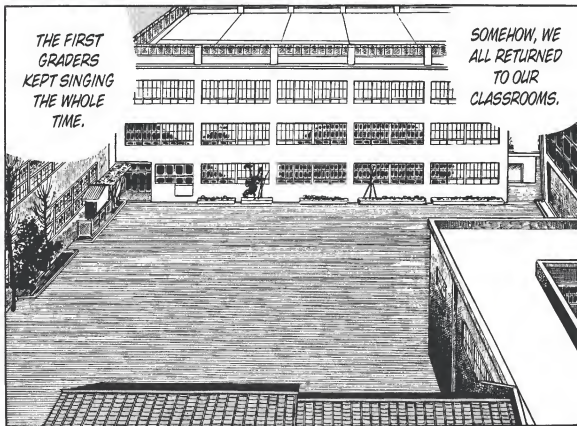
S-SAKI...!
SOB...



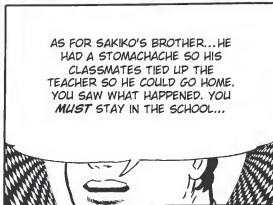
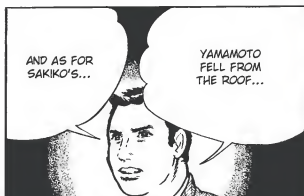
...I FORGOT
ALL ABOUT
YOU. I'M SO
SORRY!!

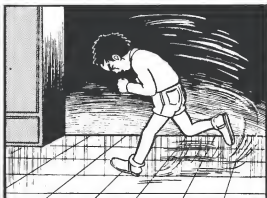
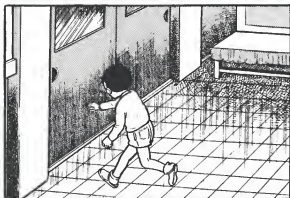
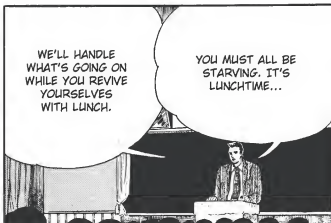
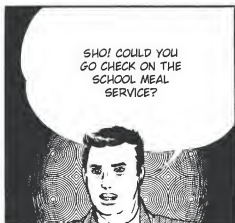






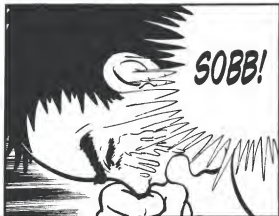








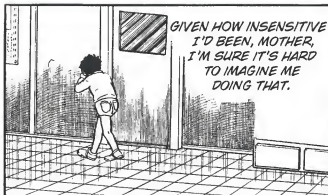
I WAS CERTAIN MR. WAKAHARA KNEW HOW MUCH I NEEDED TO CRY OUT LOUD.



SOBB!



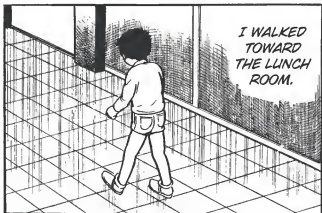
AS SOON AS I GOT OUT OF THE ROOM I STARTED CRYING LOUDER AND LOUDER.



GIVEN HOW INSENSITIVE I'D BEEN, MOTHER, I'M SURE IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE ME DOING THAT.



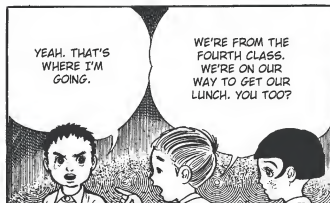
TEARS FELL BY MY FEET.

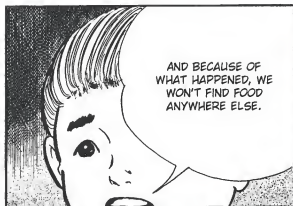


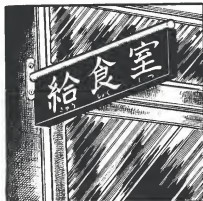
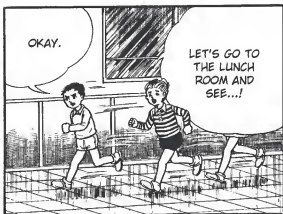
I WALKED TOWARD THE LUNCH ROOM.



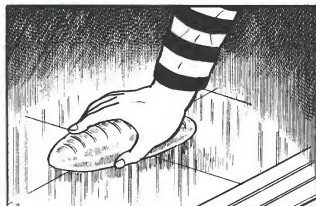
I FELT DIZZY. I REALIZED THAT I HADN'T HAD ANYTHING TO EAT ALL DAY.







*SIGN=LUNCH SERVICE ROOM

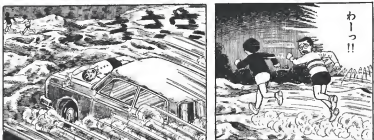
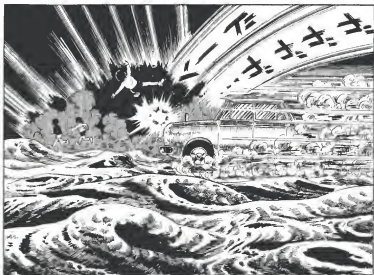






TO BE CONTINUED...

IN THE NEXT VOLUME...



Madness takes hold as the teachers and students realize they are trapped in a lifeless world! Sekiya, the cafeteria worker, takes control of the school's food supplies, enforcing his authority with a gun. As the adults start to fight among one another, sixth-grader Sho makes the startling discovery of where they are and what has happened to them. Soon, Sho and his classmates must venture into the wasteland beyond the school gates...and make the choice between a slow death from hunger or a quick death at a killer's hands...

AVAILABLE OCTOBER 2006!



ABOUT THE ARTIST:

KAZUO UMEZU

By Patrick Macias

"You'll never believe who just passed by," my neighbor's excited voice on the phone was saying. "Kazuo Umezu! I didn't see him, but my wife did. Now I'm going around the neighborhood to see if I can track him down!"

I live in Tokyo (at least part of the year, anyway), on the west side, near Kichijoji station. This laid-back part of town is known for its animation studios. The Studio Ghibli museum is here also. And, to cap it all off, it's where Kazuo Umezu, the author of *The Drifting Classroom*, makes his home.

One reason my friend was reacting as if a mythological creature (a leprechaun, maybe) had just been sighted in the vicinity is that, according to the locals, to see Umezu in his natural habitat means you've been blessed with good luck. (But of course, it's more complicated than that. Exactly *what* kind of luck depends on the color of striped sweater he's wearing that day. Umezu only wears striped sweaters, with his red and white ones being the best known.)

It's a strange and wonderful thing to imagine, but apparently, it happens quite a bit: the inhabitants of Kichijoji dashing through the streets to get a peek at the famed manga-ka. Because, as Umezu himself once said in interview, "If you are chasing someone, it is a joke. But if you are the one being chased, this is horror."

In Japan, "Kazuo Umezu" is as much of a brand name of horror as "Edgar Allan Poe" or "Stephen King." Audiences have eagerly consumed his distinctive works in the genre for generations, through his original manga or numerous television and movie adaptations. His moniker even graces the famed Kazuo Umezu Haunted Mansion, a seasonal attraction in Tokyo top-rated by connoisseurs of that type of thing.

There's also Umezu the "gag manga" artist. The single most popular creation associated with "Kazz" (as he's often referred to) is the snot-nosed and scatologically obsessed wild child Makoto-chan. First introduced in 1971, the grotesque and rudely funny *Makoto-chan* series became a national sensation, spawning an animated film as well as a lucrative merchandising boom in the guise of Makoto-chan key chains, pencil sharpeners, and miniature toilets.

It's been a lifetime of alternating between fits of

laughter and bouts of terror, much like the imagination and moods of a child.

Kazuo Umezu was born September 3, 1936 in Wakayama, a rural prefecture located on the coast of southwest Japan. Nurtured on *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, encouraged by his parents, and inspired—like so many others of his generation—by Osamu Tezuka's groundbreaking postwar comics, the young Umezu produced amateur manga at a prodigious rate. At age 18, two of his comics, both of which he'd authored while still in junior high school, were acquired and published by a regional rental comics library. Umezu spent the first phase of his professional career in the mid-fifties creating works exclusively for the rental market.

As the pay library market began to shrink, artists flocked to Tokyo to find employment with the major publishers, who were themselves hungry for new talent to fill the pages of their burgeoning weekly and monthly manga magazines. Umezu created new works for both shojo (girls) and shonen (boys) anthologies. His early- to mid-sixties titles (which are said to have intimidated Tezuka himself) were amazingly diverse and ran the gamut from starry-eyed romance to adventure, from science fiction to giant monster stories—including a very strange *Ultraman* adaptation.

As the decade neared conclusion, Umezu finally shook the strong Tezuka influence that had dominated his youth and began to work in an increasingly original and uncanny vein. His horror works culminated in his 1969-1970 serial *Orochi*, a mix of heavy gothic atmosphere and tight pulp storytelling in the best *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* tradition.

Following *Orochi*, Umezu became a full-blown multimedia star with his *Makoto-chan* manga. He even made forays into rock and roll as the front man of the Makoto-chan band (whose hit single was "Diarrhea Pants Rock").

Somewhere in the midst of all this activity, Umezu began serializing *The Drifting Classroom* in 1972 in the pages of *Shonen Sunday* magazine. So began the next, most ambitious phase of Umezu's body of work.

With their emphasis on biology, evolution, and Big Ideas, *The Drifting Classroom*, *My Name Is Shingo*

KAZUO UMEZU'S SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY



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4



(1982-86), and *Fourteen* (1990-95) (see Selected Bibliography, below) were unprecedented epics in the field of manga, and were certainly Umezu's most impressive artistic statements. And of the bunch, *The Drifting Classroom* is the best known and most widely read.

In the career-overview book *Kazuo Umezu* (Kawada Shobo Shinsha, 2004), critic Yuuichiro Kurihara speculates on *Drifting Classroom's* popularity: "It appears to be a human drama about children who begin from a state of no hope, and eventually come back to hopefulness."

But what about the world they inherit?

Kurihara again: "You have to consider that Umezu's later work depicts the end of humanity. In that respect, *Drifting Classroom* is really the doorway to the extinction of the human race."

In later works, such as the apocalyptic *Fourteen*, a spiraling cosmic madness quickly eclipses concerns like survival and feeling good about the future. By contrast, *Drifting Classroom* still seems like an oasis, a fountain of hope surrounded by ruins. After all, despite the death, despair, and treachery, the children in the story also become fully realized human beings—adults on their own terms, really—by overcoming the adults around them.

Umezu himself is now well into his sixties, but he remains the portrait of the eternal child. And in the same books where we are asked to consider *The Drifting Classroom* as an entryway to the abyss, there is a picture of Kazz himself swinging like a loon from the branches of the cherry blossom trees.

Looks like fun to me.

Patrick Macias is the author of *TokyoScope: The Japanese Cult Film Companion* (Cadence Books) and the co-author of *Cruising the Anime City: An Otaku Guide to Neo-Tokyo* (Stone Bridge Press).

1 Brother and Sister's Forest (*Mori no kyôdai*, 1955) Umezu's first published work—a "Hansel and Gretel" story he drew in junior high school.

2 Another World (*Bessekai*, 1955) Neolithic kids in prehistoric times stumble into a strange world of cannibalism and giant mosquito people. Umezu's second published work.

3 Comical Naughty Story (*Nakiwarai yancha monogatari*, 1955) Loud and obnoxious Osaka-style gag comedy strip about a mischievous girl named Yasuko.

4 Doll Girl (*Ningyo shôjo*, 1959) Umezu first began drawing classically big-eyed shôjo manga with this tear-jerking story about a poor girl adopted by a nice family. The catch is, to earn her keep, she must babysit a doll. Realistic postwar setting.

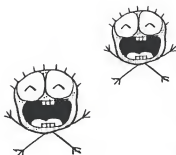
5 Medicine of Romance (*Romance no kusuri*, 1961) Starry-eyed female protagonist struggles to make the man of her dreams take "Love Potion #9." The first in the *Romance* series.

6 Cat Face (*Neko men*, 1963) Deformed peeping tom falls in love with a beautiful woman and starts torturing her suitors. Supernatural revenge story set in ancient Japan drawn in a raw, brutal style.

7 Lost World—Gamora (1964-1965) Giant monster action in the Godzilla tradition. Multi-generational plot begins in ancient Japan, then jumps to the present day for massive city stomping.

8 Girl with Cat's Eyes (*Nekome no shôjo*, 1965) Poe's "Black Cat" given the Umezu twist. The Master of the House hates cats—unfortunately his daughter looks like one. He poisons her, and she makes wooden cat statues to enact revenge.

9 Ultraman (1966-1967) Adaptation of the classic superhero TV show. Deviates from televised version in bizarre and wonderful ways as Umezu had only seen the pilot episode.



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10 Laughing Mask (*Warai kamen*, 1967) As a result of a government conspiracy, a biologist is forced to wear a ghoulish mask. Two boy detectives cross his path and learn the truth about the giant ants he's studying. Sci-fi-adventure-mystery mix points toward later works such as *The Drifting Classroom*.

11 Face of Scales (*Uroko no kao*, 1968) Seemingly another snake-girl story, but this time the transformation of the heroine into a giant serpent is astonishingly grotesque.

12 Shadow (*Kage*, 1968) Beautiful girl obsessed with her mirror begins to battle her own demonic reflection. Umezu's art and background details take giant leaps.

13 The Snake Girl and the Silver-Haired Witch (*Hebi musume to hakuhaatsu ma*, 1968) A home invasion by the title characters scares the hell out of a little girl. Also a 1968 movie from Daiei, in which Umezu has a cameo as a cab driver.

14 Cat's Eye Kid (*Nekome kozo*, 1967-1968, 1976) A ghost-story anthology built around the wanderings of a strange little kid with cat's eyes through Japan.

15 Orochi (1969-1970) A mysterious girl named Orochi (an old Japanese word for "serpent") drifts across a gloomy landscape in a loosely connected series of short suspense stories. In 2002, VIZ released a single volume in the series as *Orochi: Blood*.

16 Dali's Man (*Dali no otoko*, 1969) Disturbing fun with artists and models. Visuals inspired by Salvador Dali.

17 Iara (1970) A man searching for the meaning of the word "Iara" travels through time and space in a strange short story anthology. The adult-strength version of *Orochi*.

18 Again (1970-1972) Old man takes medicine that turns him into a high school kid. Hangs out with his grandson. This shonen gag breakthrough led to *Makoto-chan*.

19 Makoto-chan (1971) See intro.

20 The Drifting Classroom (*Hyouryū kyōshitsu*, 1972-1974) See intro.

21 Album of the Dark (*Yami no album*, 1974-1975) Twenty-four black-humor short stories of free-flowing surrealism. Relentless graphic experimentation—also spawned a concept LP by Umezu.

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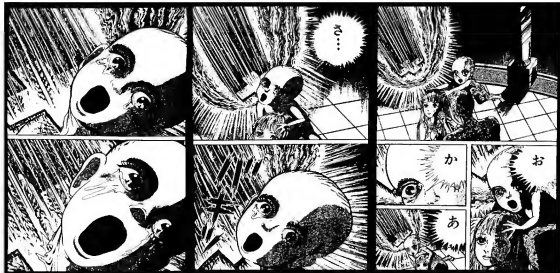


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22 *Baptism (Senrei, 1974-1976)* An aging actress plots to switch brains with her beautiful young daughter so she can relive her youth. Things don't quite work out, though. Film adaptation available on video in US as *Baptism of Blood*.

23 *My Name Is Shingo (Watashi wa Shingo, 1982-1986)* Star-crossed lovers, a boy and girl, inadvertently program a factory robot arm into sentience. After the boy and girl are separated, the robot arm wanders the earth. This popular love-story sci-fi classic is an epic account of the human experience.

24 *The Left Hand of God, the Right Hand of the Devil (Kami no hidarite, akuma no migite, 1986-1989)* Umezu's most relentless "pure horror" work: a masterpiece of the abnormal, of dream and reality colliding head on. A young boy experiences visions and nightmares as his sister suddenly begins vomiting forth stranger and stranger objects. It all goes back to a gruesome serial killing spree that occurred before they were born and still haunts the local community.

25 *Fourteen (1990-1995)* One day in the bleak near-future, a scientist discovers that a lump of chicken meat is becoming sentient. The lump eventually grows into Chicken George, a half-chicken, half-man creature who seeks revenge on humanity for their mistreatment of animals. Things get complicated when he falls in love with a human girl.

Thanks to Izumi Evers, Tomo Machiyama, and Yuji Oniki.

THE DRIFTING CLASSROOM

Vol. 1

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THE DRIFTING CLASSROOM is rated M for Mature and is recommended for mature readers. Contains strong language and graphic violence.

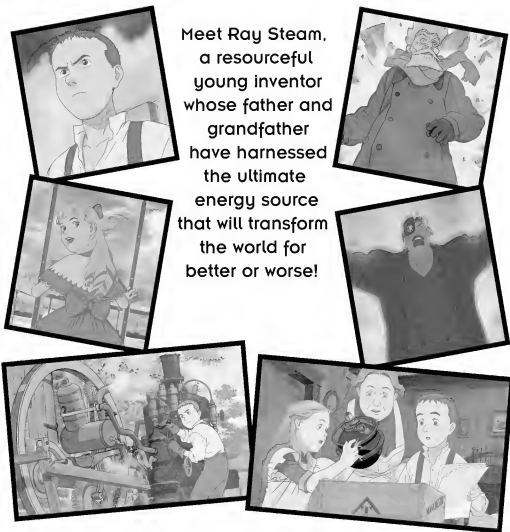


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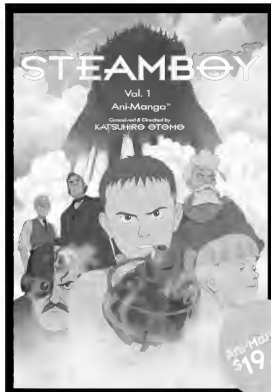
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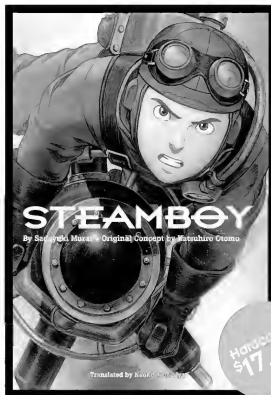
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